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24 April 2015

Mrs Fiona Minshall  
Headteacher  
Saint Paul's Catholic High School  
Firbank Road  
Manchester  
M23 2YS

Dear Mrs Minshall

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Saint Paul's Catholic High School**

Following my visit to your academy on 23 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's most recent section 5 inspection. The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of heads of department, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, a representative of the diocese of Shrewsbury and a representative of the local authority. I also held discussions with a group of students and spoke with many students during break and lunch times. A learning walk around the academy was undertaken. The academy trust and the academy improvement and action plans were scrutinised.

#### **Context**

There have been no substantive changes to staffing or any change in the academy's status since the section 5 inspection which judged the academy to have serious weaknesses.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The academy improvement plan prioritises the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate a well-focused and purposeful approach to improvement planning. The detailed improvement plan conveys a clear direction, details accountability and allows for opportunities for impact to be evaluated. Data, tracking and monitoring systems have been sharpened and there is now a clearer view of current student progress and needs. Intervention systems are better developed but require further strengthening, particularly in relation to tackling individual student needs and the development of appropriate curriculum pathways. A review of the curriculum structure has been undertaken and significant changes will be introduced in September 2015. Progress boards are well used to chart individual student improvement in Year 11 and 10. Systems are in place to ensure that pupil premium funding (additional government funding) is more appropriately targeted and monitored. The academy continues to struggle with teacher recruitment in key areas.

I raised concerns during the monitoring inspection with regard to the current progress of Year 11 students. Current and robust academy data indicate that attainment at the end of the current Year 11 will remain largely static when compared to the previous year and in relation to the percentage of five A\* to C, including English and mathematics, GCSE grades attained. There remains a strong possibility that the academy's results for this attainment measure will be below the government floor standards for a second year. Current data on Year 10 students indicate that they are making better progress. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are aware of the urgent need to improve both the progress and attainment of students by the end of Year 11.

Programmes are now in place to share the best practice in teaching and learning. However, senior leaders recognise that the opportunities for the sharing of good practice need to be further extended and developed. Learning walks of the academy are regularly undertaken by senior staff and teachers are provided with clear feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. Academy records indicate that student behaviour is improving. However, students told the inspector that behaviour in classes remains too variable and that they experience too much disruption to their learning because of the poor behaviour of some students. Senior leaders are acutely aware of the need for academy behaviour codes to be applied consistently across all provision.

There is both greater support for and greater accountability expected of middle managers. A development programme is now in place to enhance the further effectiveness and accountability of middle leaders. This remains at an early stage and further work is required so that middle managers fully embrace their responsibilities, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and implementation of academy behaviour rules within their areas of responsibility.

Currently, senior leaders are undertaking a review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum with the aim of enhancing and embedding students' literacy and numeracy skills. Current academy data indicate that students' reading ages at both Key Stage 3 and 4 have improved as a result of intervention programmes. However, the academy has further work to do to promote a more active culture of reading for pleasure, particularly through the role and use of the academy library. I discussed with the headteacher the need to engage students more fully as participants in the development of an aspirational and improvement culture. Academy leaders have committed to reflect on these discussions.

The size of the governing body has been reduced and a central strategic group formed. The monitoring and evaluation of academy performance has been strengthened. I have recommended that the governors review the progress of those students eligible for support through the pupil premium half termly so as to bring them into line with the practice of senior leaders. There has been a review of governance and recommendations have been acted upon.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement and action plans are fit for purpose.

The academy trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Interim Director of Children's Services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

**Her Majesty's Inspector**