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9 November 2015

Mrs Andrea Towey  
Headteacher  
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School  
Henshall Avenue  
Latchford  
Warrington  
WA4 1PY

Dear Mrs Towey

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 October, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

### **Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Warrington and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely  
Aelwyn Pugh  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014**

■ Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, in order that pupils across the school make good progress, particularly in mathematics and in writing, by ensuring that:

- time is regularly given for pupils to check, correct or rewrite their work in response to the guidance given to them through the marking they receive
- teachers check more frequently on the progress of pupils so work can be adapted more quickly, particularly for the most able, to better meet their learning needs
- teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and completion of work are raised
- support from teaching assistants is always of good quality and is well matched to the individual pupils' needs
- pupils are given more opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical and writing skills in different subjects, in Years 1 to 6
- pupils in Years 1 and 2 are secure in their learning and understanding of sounds and letters
- across Years 1 to 6, pupils consistently spell words correctly, present work neatly, legibly and with accuracy
- pupils are consistently interested in their work so that their attitudes to learning are always good and they readily respond to teachers' requests to complete their work.

■ Urgently increase the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by ensuring that:

- accurate data is used and clearly summarised, to frequently measure the speed and effect of actions taken to improve teaching and pupils' achievement
- prompt action is taken to enable teachers to meet their individual targets to improve their performance more quickly, particularly in the teaching of mathematics but also in writing
- senior leaders decisively and more quickly tackle weaknesses in subject leadership, particularly in mathematics.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 October 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. He spoke to teachers and pupils in classrooms and around the school and held a meeting with eight pupils, chosen at random from Years 3 to 6. He looked at work in books and in displays and listened to pupils read. He spoke to 15 parents as they brought their children to school and looked at the responses to a questionnaire that the school used to gather parents' views in June 2015.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, one new teacher has been appointed to the school and another has returned from maternity leave.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Standards in the school are rising. At the end of last term, the proportions of 11-year-olds who reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages for 2014. In reading and mathematics, a higher than average percentage also reached the higher levels of performance. For seven-year-olds, results in mathematics were better than last year's national average. Despite improvements, their results in reading and writing were lower than the most recent averages. The gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school has narrowed but is still too wide.

The work in pupils' books and the school's own analyses show that the upward trend in performance is being maintained. The pupils who had been given additional support had effective ways of deciphering long or unfamiliar words. However, once they had worked out what a particular word was and what it meant, they did not always put it back into context and read the whole sentence through again. As a result, their reading was not as fluent as it might be. At all stages in the school, pupils are making a very determined effort to improve the quality of their writing by using a wider vocabulary and a variety of sentence constructions. In the mathematics lessons seen, older pupils were developing a good understanding of probability while younger ones were beginning to understand how to estimate the length of the sides of a book.

In the early years, children are making progress from their starting points. However, the rate of progress needs to increase considerably if these children are to perform as well as others across the country. Last term, the proportion of early years children

who achieved a good level of development was higher than in the previous year but still well below average. Results in the screening on phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make) at the end of Year 1 were also too low.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The school's own records, as well as evidence from external consultants and from this visit, indicate that the quality of teaching in the school is improving but remains inconsistent. The use of questioning is still not good enough. In the lessons seen, the teachers relied too much on answers volunteered by the pupils. There was too little focus on checking the understanding of those pupils who were less forthcoming. The teachers rarely used additional questions to help pupils correct errors and misconceptions or to develop their ideas. In Key Stage 1 particularly, the teachers did not always do enough to ensure that every pupil was concentrating.

There have been clear improvements in marking, with teachers giving precise and helpful advice on how work can be improved. The pupils act on this advice. As a result, they are improving their spelling, extending their vocabulary and taking care to produce clear, legible handwriting. However, in their comments, teachers do not always provide pupils with accurate models of grammar and punctuation.

Observations in lessons and examination of books indicate that the most-able pupils are not always given work that is sufficiently challenging for them.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

The pupils behave well in the corridors and around the building. They relate well to each other and to adults and visitors. They also respect the school environment, which is kept in a good state of repair and cleanliness by the site manager and his colleagues. In lessons, however, too many pupils become distracted and lose concentration when they are not being directly overseen by a member of staff or when explanations are too long or unclear.

The pupils who spoke to the inspector said that they enjoyed coming to school and would recommend St Augustine's to others. They felt safe in the school and also when travelling to and from home. Bullying, they said, happens very rarely and, when it does, is dealt with robustly and quickly. All of them knew who to contact if they had personal worries or concerns about their work. They knew how to keep themselves safe in a variety of circumstances, including when using the internet and social media. They were very enthusiastic about the road safety campaign in which they had recently been involved and also about the work they had done on Judaism and Islam.

The great majority of the parents who spoke to the inspector, or responded to the school's questionnaire, were very positive about the support that they, their families

and their children received from staff. The school works closely with family support and outreach workers, social care and other agencies to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of its pupils. It has rigorous systems for checking on the suitability of staff to work with children.

In consultation with the police and the local authority, the school has acted very promptly to tackle the problem of illegal parking outside the school that posed a threat to pupils' safety.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The school's leaders have made clear improvements to the quality of education provided for the pupils. They have been very open to the advice and feedback provided by external consultants and advisers and have been prepared to review and change their own practices. As a result, their expectations of pupils and staff are now far higher. They have a clear view of the strengths of the school and are tackling the remaining weaknesses systematically. They recognise that the next major focus must be to raise expectations and standards in the early years and Key Stage 1.

The governors have made good use of the training and advice they have received. They now have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have established a coherent structure of committees to support their work. Through careful analysis of results, regular meetings with the senior leaders and visits to classrooms, they now know what specific improvements need to be made to raise the quality of teaching and learning. They are less clear about the use and impact of pupil premium funding. Their plans show how much money is to be used for particular kinds of activity. However, there is no indication of precisely how much improvement disadvantaged pupils are expected to make and by how much the gap in performance between them and other pupils is expected to narrow over a particular period of time. This makes it impossible for the school to make an accurate assessment of how effectively it is using the funding.

Following the last monitoring visit, the school has revised its timetable to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced curriculum while also receiving any additional help they might need with English or mathematics. The information about the curriculum on the school's website is too general. It tends to be confined to topic headings, with very little information on what learning is to be developed through those topics. Leaders recognise the need to improve this aspect of the school's work and to ensure that teachers have strong subject knowledge, not only in English and mathematics but also in other subjects.

In reviewing the quality of teaching, leaders have concentrated on how effectively members of staff are contributing to the achievement of the school's overall targets.

They now plan to work with individual teachers to tackle specific aspects of their practice that need to be improved.

### **External support**

Following the last monitoring visit, the local authority and diocesan representatives established a series of regular school support meetings, with the school leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body, to review progress. The support work that the representatives provide is now more clearly coordinated. Earlier this term, for example, they conducted a two-day, joint review that led to a report which leaders found useful and informative. The local authority representative's support and advice at meetings has also helped to improve the quality of the governors' work.

### **Priorities for further improvement:**

- As a matter of urgency, set far more ambitious targets for the early years and review and improve practice in this area of the school's work.