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Mike O'Keefe  
Executive Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
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Wiltshire  
SN10 1DD

Dear Mr O'Keefe

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

Following my visit with Lorna Brackstone, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 24 and 25 November 2015, 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2015. 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:

### **The academy is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wiltshire and the Clifton Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2015

- Improve the capacity of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - improvement plans focus sharply on moving teaching and learning to consistently good, contain targets that are challenging, and evaluations that state whether actions taken are successful or not
  - the leadership of special educational needs effectively meets the needs of and interests of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs
  - middle leaders responsible for subjects or other aspects of the academy are supported and trained to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
  - checks on teachers' performance are carried out robustly and targets set are explicitly linked to raising the achievement of identified groups of pupils
  - the governing body holds the academy fully to account for the standard of education, and that governors are trained and equipped to do this well
  - governors and leaders engage with parents to re-establish parents' confidence in the academy.
  
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently at least good by making sure that:
  - teachers set work at the right level of challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils, in writing and mathematics
  - teachers' marking and feedback helps pupils improve the quality of their work, especially in English and mathematics
  - the support for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is planned well enough to meet the pupils' needs.
  
- Accelerate progress and raise attainment, especially in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - pupils write in all subjects, not only in English lessons
  - teachers pay greater attention to pupils' progress in spelling, punctuation, grammar, handwriting, presentation of work and written composition
  - the children in the Reception class have frequent opportunities for writing when selecting their own learning and in adult-led learning sessions
  - pupils apply what they know in mathematics in other subjects, such as in science
  - homework tasks for writing are closely linked to the work in lessons.

An external review of governance should be carried out to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 November 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, associate headteacher, assistant headteacher and subject leaders. They also held discussions with members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the diocese by telephone. The inspectors held numerous conversations with groups of pupils and parents.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring visit, the executive strategic headteacher of St Edmund's Catholic Primary School in Calne has taken up the interim post of executive headteacher of the academy. The associate headteacher, also from St Edmund's, took up post in September 2015. The governing body has been significantly restructured with the addition of eight foundation governors from St Edmund's. Two new parent governors and a staff governor have also been appointed. Governors are in discussions with Clifton Diocese about establishing a formal collaboration with St Edmund's.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Since my visit, there has been a significant improvement in pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The most noticeable improvement is in writing, where accelerated progress is reflected in the current standard of work in pupils' books. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and why. They are able to apply their knowledge confidently to think and reason for themselves. For example, Year 6 pupils were successful in planning and writing a balanced argument on the use of mobile phones in school.

Most striking are the experiences that pupils now have to use their writing skills. Books viewed across all subjects clearly show pupils writing across a range of topics with standards rapidly improving. Of particular note was the high-quality writing in history, both in books and on display. For example, Year 6 pupils have been learning about life in Anglo-Saxon times. Letters they have written not only demonstrate their skills in grammar, spelling and punctuation but also their developing research skills used to find out historical facts.

The focus on handwriting is paying off. Pupils' work in books is presented in a much neater way with greater accuracy in spelling and better use of punctuation. Pupils talk about their teachers' high expectations of presentation in books and the hard work it takes for them to earn their 'pen licence'. Pupils describe how the weekly spelling homework is helping them to improve their accuracy in spelling when they write.

You have a clear understanding of the further improvements needed. For example, you know that in the Early Years Foundation Stage, expectations of what the children are capable of are not high enough. Recent visits to other local Reception classes are beginning to result in improvements to the provision for your youngest children. Children do not make best use of exciting areas for imaginative play and learning, such as the 'fairy-tale castle' because the purpose of the activity is not made clear to them. Children also miss out on valuable learning experiences outdoors because the outdoor area is not always made available to them.

Academy staff now use a robust tracking system effectively to provide accurate information on the progress that individual pupils are making. Teachers have a clearer understanding of how well different groups are doing. For example, the progress information about pupils with special educational needs is enabling class teachers to have a clearer understanding of their needs. Teachers take responsibility for tailoring the provision for each individual pupil and this is ensuring their accountability in the process. Meetings to review individuals' progress are effectively coordinated and parents report that they feel much more informed about how their children are doing and what provision is being made for them. Teachers are fully aware that the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers within the academy and nationally is still too wide.

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

The arrival of you and the associate headteacher as new academy leaders is revitalising teachers. They describe how the support, guidance and challenge you are providing are rapidly improving their practice and securing better progress for pupils. Teachers are increasingly confident in their teaching and are not shy in seeking support when required. Planning is now embedded and you, together with the associate head, carefully check plans to ensure that teachers are clear about the approaches they will take to better meet the needs of all pupils.

Teachers' expectations of what their pupils can do continue to rise and this is reflected in the quality of work seen in pupils' books and in displays this term. Teachers are increasingly setting work at the right level of challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils in writing and mathematics. For example, in Year 2, pupils confidently solve division problems. The use of the 'chilli peppers' as a guide to the level of difficulty clearly demonstrated the real challenge provided for the most-able pupils.

Teachers' improved subject knowledge and clearer explanations are helping to make sure pupils understand what is required. Improvements in the quality of teachers' questioning challenge pupils and make them think more deeply about their responses. For example, in a Year 5 writing lesson, the teacher was not accepting the first response by pupils. Instead, careful probing of their thinking using the phrase, 'tell me more' enabled pupils to demonstrate their understanding of characterisation. Consequently, they were well prepared for the writing activity that followed.

Pupils describe how teachers' high-quality guidance is helping them make better progress. They find teachers' comments helpful, especially in their English and mathematics work. Pupils are able to apply their learning in these subjects across other areas such as history and science. They are very clear that the targets set for improvement by their teachers are helping them 'to get better in their learning'. The academy's consistently applied marking policy ensures that pupils know exactly how well they are doing and understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils also understand the importance of homework and see it as an opportunity to consolidate or extend what they have learnt in class.

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

Pupils and parents talk positively about the changes which are being made in school and are pleased there is a significant push in learning. Pupils report that lessons are more challenging and interesting. As a consequence, behaviour is improving, as confirmed during the inspection. Pupils comment on how there is an increased range of subjects they are learning about, which they find exciting. They describe how their attitudes to learning are improving and how they have a desire to work hard.

Pupils are pleased that expectations of behaviour are higher. They comment that the new rules are 'fairer and make the school better'. Pupils are extremely pleased that you take the opportunity to listen to their views through the school council and the introduction of other pupil forums such as 'eco-warriors'.

Pupils are aware that there is greater equality of opportunity, for example through participation in sports fixtures. They are also very clear that everyone has equal opportunity for their work to be celebrated either through assemblies or displays. Pupils know that if they do their best, their efforts will be recognised whatever their ability.

You carefully monitor the attendance of all pupils. Attendance continues to improve as a result of pupils enjoying their learning and being eager to come to school regularly and on time.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The pace of improvement under your leadership and the associate headteacher is rapid. A typical comment made by a parent sums up the views of parents: 'I would not have believed that the school could change so quickly and by so much'. The momentum of change has been significant in all aspects of the academy. This is ensuring that improvements are securely adopted and embedded by staff.

The new leadership team shares a determination and ambition for the academy to be highly successful. You, as leader, are the catalyst and, along with the associate headteacher, have quickly gained the confidence and respect of the academy community.

The leadership of the associate headteacher is described by teachers as 'inspirational'. This view is also held by the many parents spoken to and those who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. One commented: 'the headteacher is amazing; she makes every child feel special and knows not only their names but also about them. This is reflecting on their learning, they are making really great progress.'

The associate headteacher, with your support, carefully checks on the quality of teaching and provides support and challenge to teachers when required. Teachers receive regular feedback about their practice through their 'monitoring statement' and are very appreciative of leaders' guidance and direction. The improving teaching is resulting in the rapidly rising standards in the academy. Teachers talk about how morale has significantly improved. Parents comment on the positive change in the quality of teaching, for example in the comment that, 'teachers are inspiring our children as leaders are inspiring them'.

Your improvement plans clearly state what actions you are taking and how you will know whether these actions are having the right impact. Consequently, you and your senior leaders are very aware of the further improvements that are required, for example in the early years.

Subject leaders are now in place and beginning to play a stronger part in driving improvement at the academy. Action plans for individual subjects have been written. Subject leaders are aware that they need to amend these plans to ensure that the momentum continues on further raising pupils' outcomes. Subject leaders value the high-quality guidance they receive from academy leaders and from colleagues at St Edmund's. They feel well supported in how to grow and develop as leaders through ongoing training and development opportunities. They describe how you listen to their views and value the contributions they make.

Established governors are embracing the support of recently appointed experienced foundation governors from St Edmund's. The review that has been undertaken and the subsequent actions being implemented are ensuring that governance is effective in providing essential support and challenge for the academy. There is a shared ambition for the academy to be quickly removed from special measures.

### **External support**

You are effectively using best practice from your school in Calne to ensure teachers are receiving high-quality training and support. You are not afraid to seek support from other highly effective providers. For example, you have clear and robust action plans in place to ensure the provision children receive in the early years is of a consistently high standard. You are making good use of the local authority and the diocese in your determination to maintain the momentum you have so quickly put in place since your arrival at the academy.