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Mr Tony McGuinness
Principal
All Saints Catholic High School
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Dear Mr McGuinness

Special measures monitoring inspection of All Saints Catholic High School

Following my visit with Allan Torr, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Ahmed Marikar, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 2 and 3 March 2016, 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 that 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 that took place in December 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection on condition that they will have opportunities to observe good and outstanding professional practice and will receive high-quality support. At this time, there is no restriction on the number of newly qualified teachers that you can appoint, or the subject departments that they can be appointed to.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Knowsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2014.

- Improve the achievement of all students, including those in the sixth form, so that it is at least good, by ensuring teachers:
 - improve the accuracy with which they assess the progress that all students make and that they analyse this information and use it to better inform their lesson planning
 - identify gaps in students' understanding more quickly and take decisive action to fill any gaps
 - raise their expectations of what their students can achieve and make sure they are given work that is more appropriately challenging so students are required to think more deeply, evaluate, and explain in more detail
 - develop opportunities for all students to build their confidence in speaking and writing at length, particularly in Key Stage 3, using the specific vocabulary of the different subjects they study
 - help students to improve their numeracy and literacy skills in all subjects
 - set high-quality homework frequently, in line with the best practice seen in the school
 - give opportunities to students to respond to feedback they receive, to ensure they understand what they need to do to improve and, over time, to apply what they have learned.

- Improve students' attitudes to their learning by ensuring they:
 - attend more regularly, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those in the sixth form
 - catch up on any work missed as a result of their absence
 - take more pride in their work
 - do not get involved in causing low-level disruption.

- Improve urgently the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by:
 - improving the rigour with which all teachers and leaders, particularly subject leaders, are held to account for the progress of students
 - developing the skills teachers, leaders and governors use to analyse the data they collect, in order to better use it to identify areas for improvement and inform their planning
 - strengthening further the communication and hence partnership working between the school and parents.

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 March 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. They met with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, a group of governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the archdiocese and local authority. They observed teaching and learning in all year groups apart from Year 11, who were taking mock examinations at the time of the inspection, and spoke with teachers following observations. They spent time observing how pupils behaved around the school during breaks and lunchtimes.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a new head of English has been appointed. She will take up her position in June 2016.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The Principal's continued drive and commitment is having a very positive impact on all members of the school community. His rigour is blended with humanity which means that staff feel valued and are willing to 'go the extra mile' to bring about the necessary improvements. Pupils speak positively of the difference he has made, particularly to behaviour around the school. It is clear that he is taking his staff and pupils with him on this journey of improvement. A recent survey confirms that staff morale has improved significantly since his arrival.

The new roles for senior leaders have brought greater clarity about responsibilities and accountability. This has enabled them to lead their respective areas more effectively. New systems and procedures throughout the school are now embedded and leaders are more focused on evaluating the impact of their actions.

In January, the second in the mathematics department stepped up to lead the department on a temporary basis. She is carrying out this role well, ensuring that the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4, prepares pupils effectively for success in their examinations. She has developed consistent procedures for planning lessons and marking and these are being embedded across the department.

An assistant principal is leading the English department until the arrival of the new head of department in June. Senior leaders and governors are aware that the current level of staff absence in this department is affecting the progress of some pupils. They have approached the archdiocese to see if they can arrange any support from other schools in the short term. Senior leaders are keen to find a solution to the open teaching spaces, which also have a detrimental effect on teaching and learning in this department.

As a result of effective leadership, the sixth form continues to be a strength of the school. Leaders and governors took the right decision to offer a purely vocational

curriculum that meets the needs of learners effectively. During the inspection, learners were keen to tell inspectors how much they value the teaching and support they receive.

The governing body continue to provide the right balance of strategic leadership and ongoing support and challenge to the Principal and his team. While rightly proud of the distance the school has travelled on its journey of improvement, they have a clear grasp of the remaining issues and challenges, and are working hard to resolve them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Rigorous monitoring procedures indicate that more pupils are benefiting from good teaching across a range of subjects. Leaders gave examples of specific cases where recent targeted professional development has led to improvement in teachers' practice. While the overall quality of teaching is improving, senior leaders are keenly aware that inconsistencies exist both within and between departments.

Observations of teaching and learning during the inspection provided evidence of this variability. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve and do not challenge them to make the best possible progress. In contrast to this, inspectors observed examples of pupils being challenged to achieve the highest possible standards. This was particularly evident in two Year 10 English lessons with the most- and least-able pupils, who were keen to tell inspectors how much they valued this high-quality teaching. One girl said, 'I love coming to English. It's really structured. You always know what you're doing and it's really clear.'

Senior leaders know that there is still variability in how effectively teachers apply the school's marking policy. The book scrutiny revealed that even when teachers set pupils tasks to improve their work, too many pupils do not attempt these challenges. Of most concern is that when this happens, teachers do not always pick it up. Examples of pupils' untidy presentation and incomplete work is further evidence of some teachers not having high enough expectations.

Pupils' books show that teachers do not mark literacy errors consistently. Senior leaders know that there needs to be a greater focus on literacy and oracy across the school. To this end they have launched the 'Literacy for Life' scheme. This encourages all teachers to raise the profile of writing, talking and reading in their lessons. Inspectors saw some evidence of this happening in lessons during the inspection, but it has only been in place for a few weeks. The reading programme used with Key Stage 3 pupils is doing little to develop their reading habits.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Staff and pupils all agree that the arrival of the Principal, coupled with the new behaviour policy, has led to improved behaviour throughout the school. Inspectors saw this for themselves when they observed pupils during social times, where their behaviour was calm, mature and friendly. In lessons observed during the inspection, pupils generally demonstrated positive attitudes to learning. On the few occasions where this was not the case, teachers managed any low-level disruption effectively so that little learning time was lost.

There has been significant improvement in the attendance of all pupils and of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs. While pleased that the actions they have taken are making an impact, senior leaders are well aware that the attendance figures are still well below national figures and there is still much work to be done to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly. Disadvantaged boys in Year 11 are the biggest priority as their attendance still gives much cause for concern.

Senior leaders know that poor attendance and behaviour are major barriers to pupils making good progress and have made sure that they are high priorities for all staff. Leaders have been successful in explaining the reasons for higher behaviour expectations to pupils, who have welcomed this new focus. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors felt that the system of rewards and sanctions was fair and having a positive impact on behaviour. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased since December, as has the number of pupils spending time internally excluded in the Reconciliation Room.

Outcomes for pupils

Senior leaders are confident that their predictions for Year 11 2016 outcomes are accurate because they are based on robust systems which include internal and external moderation. These projections indicate that attainment in English and mathematics will increase slightly. Progress measures in mathematics are set to improve but current assessment information indicates that in English these will remain the same. Senior leaders believe that these projections will increase over coming months as a result of the work done with this year group following their mock examinations.

Leaders have ensured that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have been the top priority for all staff over recent months. As a result, achievement gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Year 11 are set to narrow in 2016. The progress made by Year 11 pupils who have special educational needs is also projected to improve in 2016.

The school's assessment information about Year 10 indicates that they are on track to achieve better outcomes than previous cohorts. Inspectors saw evidence of this

improved progress in some Year 10 lessons and in the work that some pupils in this year group are producing.

Information provided by the school shows that the pupils in the Year 7 and 8 literacy groups are making progress, some at a rapid pace.

Learners in the sixth form make strong progress as a result of effective teaching. In 2015, the majority of learners followed vocational pathways and the average grade per entry was Distinction*. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers also narrowed significantly from the previous year. The very impressive careers programme is an integral part of the curriculum that meets the needs of learners and prepares them effectively for post-18 progression into higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

External support

The local authority continues to play a significant part in the school's progress towards the removal of special measures. Throughout this journey it has provided practical support, not least through an officer spending considerable time working alongside senior leaders, which the Principal has valued enormously. As the capacity of senior leaders has developed this officer has stepped back, playing a more coaching and mentoring role. As she explains, 'senior leaders are now driving things themselves'. The latest local authority review, which took place only a week before the inspection, finds that 'There are measurable improvements in all key areas that are bringing about sustained positive change across the school.'

As the school moves towards the end of its monitoring period, the executive monitoring board is planning how the work it carries out will be transferred to the sub-committees of the governing body.