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29 April 2016

James Burke OBE  
Headteacher  
St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport  
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Cheshire  
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Dear Mr Burke,

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport**

Following my visit with Bernard Robinson, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 22–23 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 October 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.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2014.**

- Improve the impact of leadership and management at all levels, in order to drive improvements in teaching and students' achievement, by:
  - ensuring that leaders at all levels have the expertise and focus to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, students' achievement and behaviour, and that they hold teachers to account for their performance
  - eradicating weak teaching, which over time has a negative impact on students' learning
  - ensuring the pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the achievement of those students it is intended to support
  - ensuring that governors hold school leaders to account effectively regarding the quality of teaching, students' achievement and behaviour
  - improving the curriculum so it ensures all students develop the literacy and numeracy skills they need to achieve well.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so it is at least consistently good and accelerates students' rate of progress particularly in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - all teachers provide students with activities that challenge them to achieve their best
  - all students are keen to learn and are encouraged to answer challenging questions about what they are being taught
  - teachers mark students' books consistently and well, in order to provide them with the information and advice they need to improve their work and check that students act upon this feedback
  - staff raise their expectations of students' achievement and insist that all students' work is completed and presented to a high standard.
  
- Raise standards in English and mathematics for all students, but particularly for boys and disadvantaged students, so that they are at least in line with those expected nationally by:
  - providing a very clear and effective structure, which is followed by all staff, for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, including comprehension, grammar and spelling, across the curriculum, from Year 7 through to Year 11
  - further developing older students' personal reading
  - ensuring high expectations of boys' achievement.
  
- Improve students' behaviour and their attitudes to their work by:
  - dealing consistently and robustly with low level disruptive behaviour in some lessons and occasional boisterous behaviour around the school site
  - ensuring, through improvements to teaching that all students are working well and challenged in their learning and motivated to succeed.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 22 March 2016 to 23 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: the revised school development plan; the interim headteacher's report to governors; records on the monitoring of the quality of teaching and assessment information; the school improvement partner's report; records on attendance and exclusions; information on procedures for safeguarding and reports from the fire service regarding evacuation procedures. Inspectors met with the senior leadership team, other staff and groups of pupils. I also held discussions with members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority and the diocese.

### **Context**

Following the previous monitoring visit, the headteacher resigned. A former headteacher with a strong record of school improvement was appointed to the post of interim headteacher and took up the position in December 2015. School leaders, including the diocese, are in preliminary negotiations with a view to the school becoming an academy. A new head of the mathematics department joined the school in January 2016. Since the previous monitoring visit there have been a number of long-term staff absences that have led to a growing dependence upon temporary teachers to cover lessons for absent colleagues.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

As interim headteacher, you have rapidly set in motion a substantial programme of school improvement that is already showing early signs of impact. When you took up the post in December you told staff categorically that St Anne's was 'not in a good place'. You quickly established fundamental principles regarding essential improvements to teaching that were non-negotiable; the status quo was not an option.

Your considerable experience of leading schools in challenging circumstances has inspired confidence in staff; they have welcomed the renewed sense of direction that you have swiftly established. As a result, there has been a sea change in the culture and ethos of this school, which at my previous visit appeared adrift and bereft of hope. The pupils are the first to admit that the school has improved immeasurably: it is rare indeed to see so much achieved in such a short time.

Following the previous monitoring visit, the governing body challenged school leaders to take firmer action to drive the school forward and they are now far more stringent in holding the leadership team to account. The core group of the governing body is highly focused on assessing how successful the school has been

in addressing the issues arising from the previous inspection. However, sometimes channels of communication with other governors are not always as effective as they might be.

As interim headteacher, you have been exceptionally willing to enlist all available support to secure improvement. The school improvement partner, brokered through the local authority, has provided an additional strand to your procedures for quality assurance.

The introduction of more refined systems to track pupils' progress has been immensely beneficial. Staff are expected to analyse progress information and give a clear account of the steps they have taken to help pupils who are falling behind. The impact of such intervention is then reviewed. As a result, you have ensured that staff are now held to account more effectively for the progress of pupils in their classes.

You have improved the performance management of senior leaders by ensuring that they have targets related to improvement in teaching and outcomes for pupils. There is now a clear line of sight between their actions and improvements in pupils' achievement.

You have overhauled the school improvement plan, which is now much more fit for purpose. There are clear success criteria and lines of responsibility. Progress in tackling areas of weakness is regularly reviewed so that you can easily identify where actions have had impact and equally where further refinements need to be made.

Safeguarding is effective. On a day-to-day basis pupils are well cared for and they say they feel safe in school. There has been rigorous training to keep all staff up to speed regarding current requirements in relation to safeguarding, including raising awareness of child sexual exploitation, bullying and the dangers of extremism. School leaders took swift action following my previous visit to ensure that evacuation procedures in the event of a fire comply fully with all guidelines.

Unfortunately, for many years, school leaders have failed to invest adequately in the school's infrastructure and building refurbishment. As a result, areas of the school's premises are unbecoming and, in some instances, not as safe as they might be. Of particular concern is the main entrance. This is because pupils regularly use the vehicular access route, which in itself is not fit for purpose, rather than that designed for pedestrians. School leaders have recognised that this area is potentially hazardous and are in urgent consultation with the diocese and the local authority in order to find the funding to put this right.

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

As interim headteacher, you are aware that there remains some variability in the quality of teaching across the school. Teaching is good in some subjects such as

history and religious education; it is less so in other subjects, such as design technology.

Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are more rigorous than at my previous visit. There is a programme of support for weaker teachers that has been welcomed and is already leading to improvement. You are committed to exploring all avenues in order to eradicate inadequate teaching.

There was clear evidence during this visit that actions you have taken have invigorated teaching. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are generally higher than they were; for example, they now routinely insist on better standards of behaviour and presentation in written work. During the inspection, it was heartening to see much-improved relationships between teachers and pupils: the atmosphere in all lessons observed was businesslike and purposeful, leading, in most instances, to gains in pupils' learning.

New leadership of the mathematics department shows promise and has injected vigour into this area of the curriculum. More stable staffing in English is a helpful development; pupils' progress in this subject is now more consistent than at this time last year.

All pupils spoken to during the inspection commented favourably on improvements to teachers' marking. They appreciate the guidance teachers give them and they say that this has really helped them to improve their work. Inspectors scrutinised a large sample of pupils' work and concluded unreservedly that there was discernible improvement from the previous visit.

Rigorous checks are made by senior leaders to ensure compliance with the school marking policy; as a result, books are marked regularly and, for the most part, thoroughly. On occasion, marking in English is not as effective as it might be in supporting the development of pupils' literacy skills; as a result, they make repeated mistakes.

The introduction of numerous extra-curricular clubs is a testament to how teachers have bought into your vision for school improvement. Teachers are now much more prepared to 'go the extra mile'. Pupils greatly appreciate the opportunities they now have to go over their work in revision classes. Other clubs, such as the science debating group and the film club, make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

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

Attendance remains too low and the rate of persistent absenteeism is too high. Strategies to improve attendance are in their infancy and it is too early to see strong evidence of impact.

School leaders have taken a firmer stance than previously in attempting to eradicate poor behaviour and the rate of both fixed-term and permanent exclusion has increased. As a result, the behaviour observed by inspectors was far better than on the previous visit in both lessons and around school. Pupils show more self-discipline and respect for both their peers and their teachers. This is a welcome development and is further evidence that the tide is starting to turn in the journey out of special measures.

The only exception to this positive picture is the poor behaviour observed in the dining hall. Dining arrangements at present are not conducive to the development of social skills; pupils frequently walk round with their food and some make little attempt to clear up after themselves. In addition, some members of staff do not set a good example in this regard and fail to take the opportunity to sit with pupils and encourage good manners while eating.

For a long time, the food on offer in the dining area has been atrocious and the utter antithesis of 'healthy eating': sticky buns, fat-laden sausage rolls and pizza are the principal choices made and these are eaten in a rushed manner, often polished off with a fizzy, sugary drink. Pupils spoken to expressed frustration that, although they learn about how to eat healthily, it is virtually impossible to do so, given the fare available. You have stepped in to sort this out and very soon pupils will be able to avail themselves of a far more healthy and varied menu.

Following the previous visit, you arranged a careers convention. Pupils spoke very positively about this event and say that they now feel much better informed about what they want to do in the future.

Pupils spoken to during this visit were unanimous that the incidence of bullying has diminished. This is because you have been unrelenting in raising awareness of how harmful bullying can be and, as a result, pupils are far more reluctant to hurt each other in this way.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

According to information provided by the school during the visit, predictions for the results of the forthcoming GCSE examinations for year 11 are very promising, indicating a sharp upward turn on the previous year. You have done your utmost to ensure that these predictions are reliable, by checking the quality of teachers' assessments, particularly in English and geography, with local outstanding schools and examination boards.

Assessment information across the rest of the school is also indicating improvement in most subjects and year groups. In key stage 3, most pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability, are on track to achieve their targets in English, mathematics and science.

The progress made by more-able pupils is variable across the school; nevertheless, there was clear evidence on inspection that when the teaching is strong, these pupils make good progress. For example, written answers to questions in the recent mock examinations in history demonstrated excellent subject knowledge and a strong application of the skills of historical enquiry.

Revised procedures for tracking pupils' progress have been helpful in identifying where there are remaining gaps and underperformance; the culture of accountability that you have created means that all staff are now held responsible for sorting this out. For example, the English department has identified a gap between boys' progress and that of girls: they have revised their curriculum in order to engage boys in the subject but it is still too soon to see the impact of these measures.

The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally is narrowing, particularly in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils on target to achieve five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics. To this extent, you have spent the funds available for the pupil premium effectively. (The pupil premium is additional government funding designed to support the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.) However, there are still some gaps across the school, which in some instances are widening.

### **External support**

The school has benefited from productive partnerships with the local authority and the diocese, who have both brokered links with other local schools that have helped to move the school forward. Thornleigh Salesian College has been most helpful in continuing to support the school, for example by mentoring the new head of the mathematics department and in introducing better systems to track pupils' progress.

### **Priorities for further improvement are as follows:**

- Urgently improve the safety of pupils as they enter and leave the school site.
- Embed current procedures to improve attendance so that absence rates reduce to be at least in line with the national average.