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Paul Scully  
Headteacher  
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Derbyshire  
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Dear Mr Scully

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

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 April, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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

**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.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby improve progress and attainment, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan lessons based on accurate assessment information about what pupils know and can do
  - set activities for pupils that consistently challenge them so that they can develop their writing and mathematical skills quickly
  - have high expectations for the progress of all pupils, including the most able
  - use questions skilfully to improve the range and quality of pupils' spoken responses, extend their learning and encourage all pupils to participate fully in lessons
  - provide good opportunities for Reception children to reinforce and extend their skills in the outdoor area.
  
- Raise pupils' achievement, especially in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - develop pupils' handwriting skills well
  - provide pupils with more practice to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics.
  
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - procedures for collecting, organising and sharing data about pupils' performance are effective, and assessment information is used well to improve pupils' achievement
  - middle leadership skills are improved to enable the progress of vulnerable groups to be checked robustly, and for these pupils to receive the good teaching and support they need to make good progress
  - leaders, including governors, check all aspects of the school's work rigorously and follow up identified priorities and weaknesses swiftly
  - governors strengthen their capacity to hold leaders firmly to account
  - the school's website contains all the required information for parents.

An external review of governance, including the use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 27–28 April 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and other school leaders, including the early years leader and subject leader for English. Inspectors also met other teachers in the school who do not lead core subjects. Inspectors met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority, and held a telephone conversation with a leading teacher employed by the local authority, who is supporting the school. Inspectors spoke with parents and pupils. They observed teaching in all classes in the school, apart from in Year 5, where pupils were on a residential trip. In total they observed 12 lessons, including two jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work from all year groups. In addition, they evaluated the school development plan and checked the school's website for compliance.

### **Context**

There have been no changes of staff since the last monitoring visit. However, since the last visit the governing body have taken the decision to become an academy, joining the Saint Robert Lawrence Catholic Academy Trust. This is a multi-academy trust comprising a partnership of schools in the Eastwood, Ilkeston and Long Eaton areas within the Nottingham Diocese. The Department for Education has given its approval and a provisional date of 1 July 2016 has been set for conversion. Parents were invited to give their responses by 18 March 2016 and the governing body has met to review these. The governors are working to ensure that they address any issues or concerns of parents before moving to the final stages of conversion. Leaders are confident that the deadline of 1 July will be met.

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

The headteacher has ensured that the momentum of the school's improvement has continued. As a result, senior leaders and all staff continue to channel their energies into the key areas that inspectors identified at the last inspection. The headteacher has revised and updated the school development plan. As a result, all staff and governors are able to see more clearly which changes have already taken place, which are currently being undertaken, and those actions that are yet to begin.

Parents continue to express strong support for the headteacher and say that the school remains well led and managed. Although no more views had been added to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, since the last inspection, parents that inspectors met with during the visit told them that they remained confident that the school was improving.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics are continuing to develop their role. They are working well with a leader of education from the local authority to support those teachers whose teaching is less effective. They have written effective plans, which include comprehensive and useful advice for these teachers, to ensure that the pupils in their classes learn faster. They are also checking the impact of this advice by looking at pupils' work regularly and through a programme of lesson observations. Subject leaders understand how important it is that teaching is consistently good in all year groups. They can confidently talk about what has been achieved already, and what more needs to be done.

Staff are now recording pupils' achievements in the new, electronic system that leaders introduced earlier this school year. It is beginning to show where pupils are making sufficient gains in different subjects. The system is also recording what proportions of pupils are on track to achieve the levels expected for their age, as well as the performance of both boys and girls, and disadvantaged pupils. This is a major improvement since the previous visit by inspectors. However, the system is still relatively recent and leaders have not yet had a full opportunity to analyse the results. Because of this, governors remain relatively uninformed as to where pupils are improving the most. Leaders are planning further meetings with governors so that they can ensure that governors have sufficient information to hold them rigorously to account.

Governors themselves have continued their journey of increasing effectiveness. The leadership of the very committed chair of the governing body, together with strong support from the vice-chair, has ensured that improvements, now firmly underway, have not faltered. Since the last visit, governors have attended a wide range of further training organised by the local authority. This has helped them to understand, among other things, the most effective strategies for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have held the first meeting with leaders to discuss the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, and look forward to holding further meetings to deepen their understanding of the outcomes of different groups of pupils. They have continued to be highly involved with the school and play an increasingly strong strategic role in making sure that the quality of teaching, and pupil outcomes, improve. Governors are highly aware that it is the continued commitment of staff, led by the headteacher, which is resulting in better teaching, and greater progress for pupils.

They strongly believe that becoming an academy will accelerate the improvements that staff are bringing about.

Inspectors discussed the preparation for the school's transition to academy status with the headteacher and governors. The headteacher and governors have met with members of the multi-academy trust that the school is joining and, together, have already written plans to support the quality of teaching. Members of the trust have met the school's senior leadership team, and are planning future visits, so that both parties will have a shared understanding about where teaching, and pupils'

outcomes, need to be improved most. The headteacher is aware that the staff will need a good deal of support through the process of academisation. He is working to sustain their high morale and to remind them of the improvements that their hard work is securing. Her Majesty's Inspector held a telephone conversation with another headteacher, who is part of the trust, and who will be helping to ensure that the school's process of improvement continues. He is very keen to offer support to staff and useful advice that will help them become even better. He and the headteacher at St Joseph's are planning to pair together teachers in both schools so that they can learn from each other.

At the last visit, leaders had not ensured that the school met the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. It did not display an accessibility plan, or make it clear what is being taught in each year group and subject. It also did not list the required details in respect of the governing body. Information relating to the impact of both pupil premium funding and the primary physical education and sport funding was also absent. The assistant headteacher, working with the vice-chair of the governing body, has attended to this efficiently and the website is now fully compliant. As a result, parents are better informed. They can see, for example, the effect of the spending of the pupil premium in narrowing the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others.

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

Teaching across the school is continuing to improve. Most teachers are now asking better questions that challenge pupils, particularly the most able, and make them think. Pupils who inspectors met confirm that the questions, and the work they are getting, are increasingly challenging. Teachers are also using these questions to check how much pupils have understood and then setting work for them that meets their needs more precisely. Teachers' increasingly detailed knowledge of what pupils can and cannot do is helping to ensure that lessons are more effective in moving pupils on.

The pace at which teachers deliver their lessons is helping to speed up pupils' progress. Learning is more brisk and teachers give a clear message that it is important for everyone to be productive. As a result, pupils are producing more work in lessons. On occasion, however, teachers try to cover too much in a short space of time. For example, teachers sometimes ask pupils too many questions at a rapid rate. When this happens, pupils do not get a chance to answer effectively, or to reflect on what they are thinking. At other times, adults do not check that pupils understand what they are expected to do before they begin their work. For example, inspectors noted that a small group of children in the Reception Year misunderstood what to do when they were asked to share items equally into groups. As a result, the children did not learn as quickly as they should have done.

Leaders know that the level of challenge that a small number of teachers give to their pupils is not yet high enough. Some of the work these teachers are giving to

pupils is too easy. As a result, these pupils' progress is not accelerating quickly enough. In addition, a small number of teachers are still not consistently following the school's marking and feedback policy. Where this happens, pupils are not receiving sufficient guidance on what they need to practise next. Inspectors noted that, as a result of this, pupils' progress is slower because they are given vague or little advice on precisely what skills they need to focus upon improving. In a number of instances work is not marked, which contravenes the school's policy.

Staff in the early years are continuing to develop the outdoor area so that they can provide exciting and purposeful opportunities for children to learn. The learning environment in the Reception Year is becoming increasingly effective. Inspectors noted a particularly effective example of this during their visit, where children were making sandcastles and then dividing a number of flags to put an equal number on top of each one. Children were both engaged and excited, and they were listening carefully to adults. The rate of progress in the early years is improving, as children learn well together and do as they are asked by staff.

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

Pupils have sustained their levels of appropriate behaviour in school. Breaktimes are friendly and happy social occasions, and everyone gets on very well together. Because adults manage behaviour consistently, pupils know what is expected of them and they behave well around the school. Pupils inspectors met during their visit say that bullying and name-calling remains very rare and, if it happens, they can let a member of staff know, who will sort it out quickly. Pupils also confirmed that, as before, adults continue to tell them about a range of risks they may face, along with how to stay safe when outside the school or on the internet.

Pupils say that their lessons are increasingly enjoyable, and that they feel fully involved in them. Once again, inspectors saw no disruption to learning at all during their visit. While, very occasionally, a small number of pupils sometimes lose focus during lessons, this is usually only for brief periods. They quickly pay attention again because teachers notice that they are not concentrating fully and remind them to pay attention.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Since the last monitoring visit in January 2016, pupils' achievement has begun to improve. Information provided by the school, and confirmed by pupils' work seen during this visit shows that, overall, progress is accelerating. There are increasing proportions of pupils with levels of skills expected for their age. Because of this, staff confidently predict, for example, that a greater proportion of children in Reception Year will achieve a good level of development this year. A much greater proportion of Year 1 pupils are also currently on track to pass the phonics screening check. In addition, results in this year's tests in Year 2 and in Year 6 are also set to rise to become closer to the current national averages. However, there remain considerable

gaps in what some groups can and cannot do. Leaders are aware that there are big differences in, for example, the attainment of boys and girls. This is particularly true in all subjects in Year 5 and 6, mathematics in Year 2, and in writing in Year 1. In addition, though pupils' progress has begun to accelerate generally, their attainment is not yet high enough. This is because pupils still lack sufficient skills to write as confidently and fluently as they need to.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics has continued to rise overall. Teachers have continued their drive to give pupils more opportunities to develop their reasoning skills. Pupils in key stage 2 are now having regular 'key skills' lessons that ensure that they have a better understanding of how to calculate. In addition, the work pupils are receiving is more appropriate for their different needs. Teachers are giving the most challenging work to the most-able pupils, while those who need to catch up are set suitable tasks and regular practice to improve their confidence. Inspectors looked at a great deal of pupils' mathematics exercise books during their visit. These show that many pupils are making promising progress towards the expectations for their ages. At the time of the last inspection, pupils did not always have the practical apparatus readily available to support them in their learning, and this slowed their progress. Leaders have ensured that they have purchased the appropriate mathematical resources for each class, and pupils happily confirm that they now have sufficient to be able to learn more quickly. Pupils' skills in recording their mathematics work remain underdeveloped in key stage 1, however. This is because, on too many occasions, they are merely required to fill in answers on worksheets, rather than becoming proficient in writing out the full sums for themselves.

Pupils' handwriting skills have improved considerably. Leaders have ensured that teaching assistants have been provided with guidance on how to use the school's chosen handwriting policy for pupils when they mark work. As a result, all members of staff are now correctly modelling their handwriting. Because pupils are seeing the same style of handwriting being used by adults, pupils learn to use it more quickly. Many more pupils than before are forming their letters correctly and are using a joined script in their work. This is true not only in pupils' writing books, but in their other work also. Inspectors confirmed the school's own view that most pupils are now completing their work with pride, and are writing neatly. Pupils told inspectors that they are proud that their handwriting skills have improved so much recently, and think that it is important that they take care with their work. Once in key stage 2, pupils earn a 'pen licence' after they have shown to teachers that their work is of a sufficiently high standard. Pupils value these licences highly. Staff have not yet extended the distribution of 'pen licences' to older pupils in key stage 1, but are planning to do this shortly. Inspectors noted a small number of recent occasions when supply teachers had not modelled the school's handwriting style. Leaders are aware of this and plan to give them guidance to ensure that all adults model their handwriting to pupils correctly.

Compelling evidence from a detailed scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that pupils are writing with increasing skill. They demonstrate an increasing confidence in



a wide variety of styles in a lively way, using exciting words. For example, one pupil in Year 1 had written, 'On Sunday I went on my first dive and saw sharks gliding through the water and swordfish looking around for big fish. I was horrified.' Pupils' faster progress is leading to higher overall attainment. Much of pupils' writing in Year 6, for example, is particularly well organised and effectively structured. Pupils are also developing a clearer understanding how to improve their spelling and punctuation. Pupils' skills in grammar are showing the greatest improvement. For example, pupils are using parts of speech increasingly accurately as they get older. On occasion, however, some teachers do not correct pupils' misspelling of common words. Where this happens, pupils do not learn how to spell them correctly and continue to make the same errors.

Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 were keen to tell inspectors about the new 'Know-Write-Learn' grids they were using at the start of their topic work. They were enthusiastic about having to write down what they knew about the area they were going to learn about, as well as what they wanted to find out. They told inspectors how this helps them to feel included in their lessons. They also explained how having to complete the grid at the end, writing down what they had learned, helped them think of how much better they had become, as well as assisting teachers to know what they had learned.

The support that staff give to disadvantaged pupils has begun to improve overall. Staff have a better understanding of the gaps in achievement that different disadvantaged pupils have and, as a result, they are planning better intervention for many of them. Inspectors noted some particularly effective examples of this during their visit. However, not all the support that disadvantaged pupils are receiving is helping them to raise their attainment quickly enough. Information provided by the school shows that, while some have made gains in their learning, not all pupils have. There are wide differences in attainment between these pupils and others in the school in mathematics in many of the year groups in key stage 2. It is not possible to give further details of gaps in outcomes without the risk of identifying individual pupils. However, the school's new tracking system means that staff now know which pupils are making more progress than others.

### **External support**

Though leaders and governors have taken the decision for the school to become an academy, the local authority has continued to give them considerable support. Advisers for the local authority have continued to visit the school to check the outcomes for pupils, as well as discussing with them the work that leaders are doing against the key areas for improvement. Particularly effective support has continued to come from the local authority's leader for education, who focused her attention on ensuring that the outdoor area in the Reception Year is used effectively to help pupils learn, and to supporting the leaders of English and mathematics. She has helped them considerably to develop their independence and effectiveness in assisting other colleagues. As a result, these leaders feel empowered and more confident to undertake their role.