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20 July 2017

Mr Tony Billings  
Saint Paul's Catholic High School  
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Dear Mr Billings

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saint Paul's Catholic High School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the interim board are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Leaders and interim management board should submit their action plan and a concise report of the progress made towards becoming a good school. These documents should be sent to Ofsted by 30 September 2017.

The school should take further action to:

- rapidly improve the progress that pupils make across the school, especially in mathematics, science and humanities
- take swift action to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils across the school
- rapidly improve the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- ensure that the next school improvement plan includes clear, quantifiable measures of impact

- continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' outcomes improve.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, pupils, members of the interim management board, the director of schools for the Diocese of Shrewsbury and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A learning walk was undertaken with a senior leader. A range of documentation relating to school improvement was also considered. Scrutiny of pupils' work was undertaken during the learning walk.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed to the school. The executive headteacher, who has been supporting the school, has overhauled the senior leadership team. He has evaluated their roles and responsibilities, made key strategic and structural changes and taken difficult decisions to ensure that the school is ready to improve. Since the previous inspection, one acting deputy headteacher has left the school. Added to this, the executive headteacher has stabilised staffing and reduced the number of temporary teachers at the school. New middle leaders have been appointed in key areas, including mathematics, geography and history. Furthermore, the interim management board has continued to promote improvement to the overall quality of education. Those responsible for the school are currently in the process of appointing a new governing body that will be in place for September 2017.

## **Main findings**

The leadership team at Saint Paul's Catholic High School recognises that the school is on a significant and difficult journey to becoming a good school. From an exceedingly low base, a new leadership team has embraced the challenge to improve the school. However, they have not yet taken all the necessary action required to make sufficient improvements to the school. Leaders recognise that they still have a long way to go.

That said, the executive headteacher has successfully managed to stabilise the school's staffing. He has taken difficult decisions to make wholesale strategic and structural changes to improve the quality of education that the school provides. Moreover, the executive headteacher has galvanised the staff by generating a sense of shared commitment and purpose. He has begun to build a more harmonious community where people are valued and pupils come first. The interim management board, appointed by the Diocese of Shrewsbury, has challenged and supported leaders. However, the plentiful efforts to change the school's fortunes have not yet

had time to show sufficient impact. Most notably, leaders' efforts have not been effective in significantly improving outcomes for the school's pupils.

Without doubt, the outcomes achieved by pupils in the 2016 examinations were extremely poor. Overall, pupils' progress was significantly below the national average and was worse than in 2015. The progress made by pupils in mathematics, science and humanities was extremely weak. Added to this, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was in the bottom 10% nationally of all schools. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also made very poor progress, despite this being a key area for improvement at the last inspection. That said, the proportion of pupils achieving a good grade in English and mathematics did rise again in 2016, to 46%.

Leaders are acutely aware of the challenges that they face. Current information presented by leaders shows that pupils are on track to underachieve considerably again this year, including in mathematics and humanities. Indeed, their analysis is clear that outcomes for Year 11, who have borne the impact of previous staffing issues, are likely to decline even further for pupils in 2017.

In relation to outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, outcomes remain far too low and are set to decline further this year. Leaders have not taken the necessary action to drive up standards for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The interim board equally does not have a sufficiently strong understanding of how well these pupils are doing. They have not secured the necessary leadership to drive forward learning and progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Another group that is underachieving again this year is disadvantaged pupils. Leaders know that disadvantaged pupils continue to make extremely poor progress. This is because the issues that the new leadership team have faced are deeply rooted in historic poor teaching, staff turnover and retention, and poor behaviour. Leaders require much more time to embed present initiatives and implement further wholesale changes to improve outcomes for pupils. They must also sharpen their action planning.

Leaders are honest, accurate and reflective in their analysis of the progress that they have made. The interim management board knows that there are still significant improvements to be made. That is why they have relentlessly sought out a new headteacher, to work alongside the executive headteacher and together take the school forward. The interim management board is determined to challenge leaders to deliver improved outcomes. To do this, however, it must ask more searching questions about how well groups of pupils are doing. The board must also ensure that the new headteacher realigns the school improvement plan with more care and precision. This is to make sure that there are clear, quantifiable outcomes attached to each improvement priority. The interim management board should also ensure that it knows who is responsible for delivering the key actions. This is to

strengthen accountability at all levels. Leaders and the interim management board know that the current school improvement plan lacks rigour. However, leaders are already at the stage of rewriting their development plans to support the next phase of improvement.

Despite the school improvement plan lacking sufficient rigour, leaders have rightly focused on going back to basics. They have had to put their efforts into improving behaviour, getting children into school and making sure that teaching improves. This year, leaders have been successful in improving pupils' attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school. They should be commended for this work. Leaders are aware that to improve attendance further they must continue to ensure that disadvantaged pupils attend school more frequently.

Pupils' behaviour has also improved dramatically. Pupils are courteous and respectful. During lessons, pupils now listen attentively and participate well in the activities that their teachers plan for them. During the inspection pupils said that they value the changes that leaders have made to behaviour in the school. Behavioural issues are now dealt with more consistently and fairly. Pupils know that their teachers expect the very best from them. This is the platform on which leaders and teachers must now improve outcomes for their pupils. Leaders have now established a good standard of behaviour. Leaders have introduced a new set of core values, underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos. Pupils know that they must live out the five core values of service, respect, stewardship, compassion and love.

One clear piece of evidence that pupils demonstrate those five core values on a daily basis is in the reduction of the number of behavioural incidences in class that require intervention by 'on call' staff. A further way to see the success of leaders' behaviour management strategies is in the reduction of temporary and permanent exclusions from school. Leaders have reduced exclusions from school significantly. Leaders acknowledge that they are still much higher than they would like and that exclusions remain well above the national average.

Alongside improvements to behaviour, leaders have also been successful in improving the quality of teaching. This has been one of leaders' main priorities. To do this, leaders have had to take difficult decisions to remove poorly performing teachers. This has been undertaken sensitively and the executive headteacher has been careful to maintain staff morale. However, until recently this has meant that pupils have been taught by far too many temporary teachers, particularly in science and humanities. This has had a significant effect on leaders' ability to improve outcomes for pupils. It has also left pupils with gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, outcomes continue to decline, despite considerable improvements to the overall quality of teaching. Leaders, including the interim board, must now make sure that teaching has the desired effect on pupils' progress so that the school can become a good school.

Leaders know that improving teaching is what will make the biggest difference to the school's pupils. With the support of the teaching school, a local school that is supporting Saint Paul's Catholic High School, leaders have improved the quality of teachers' planning and teachers' questioning skills. Pupils' literacy skills have also improved. Leaders have equally made some progress in ensuring that the marking and feedback policy is applied consistently well. However, despite these improvements, teaching is not yet improving pupils' progress rapidly enough so that the standards that pupils achieve improve.

Finally, leaders have not implemented sufficiently high targets for their pupils. Consequently, teachers do not routinely plan lessons that fully challenge pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders know that this is what will make the biggest difference. However, they have not yet secured the necessary improvement to outcomes, particularly in key stage 4. Leaders have, however, overhauled the school's assessment system, which now provides more accurate and reliable information on which to improve standards further.

### **External support**

The school is part of the Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust. In addition, leaders have also secured a wide range of support to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve. Currently, support is being brokered from other schools in the diocese, including All Hallows Catholic College, an outstanding school in Macclesfield. The school is also a member of the Romero Teaching School Alliance and the Manchester Catholic Education Partnership. Leaders continue to be assisted by the local authority. The interim management board is comprised of appropriately skilled people to assist in moving the school forward. From September 2017, the executive headteacher, who is a national leader of education and principal of an outstanding school teaching school, will continue to support the school in the role of school improvement partner.

I am copying this letter to the interim management board, the director of schools for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**