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24 January 2018

Kevin Gritton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Gritton

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Saint Benedict, A Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit with Peter Monk and Gary Nixon, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 11–12 January 2018, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2016.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2016.**

- Improve the quality of leadership, by:
  - ensuring that the school's use of the pupil premium funding is monitored efficiently and addresses well the needs of eligible pupils
  - ensuring that planning for improvement is focused sharply on the correct actions needed to improve the school and contains clear milestones to assess if the actions are having an impact
  - ensuring that all senior leaders are effective in their roles
  - ensuring that all subject leaders play an effective role in accelerating pupils' progress
  - taking steps to ensure that provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities within the school who do not attend the enhanced provision reach their potential.
- Reduce the proportion of pupils that still regularly fail to attend school, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not attend the enhanced provision.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
  - pupils' underperformance in science, geography and history is rectified by improving the quality of subject leadership and teaching in these areas
  - disadvantaged pupils receive better support so that they can catch up to other pupils
  - more pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but do not attend the enhanced provision, achieve at the levels of which they are capable
  - most-able pupils are challenged sufficiently to achieve at the highest levels.
- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that teachers:
  - use the information about pupils' starting points to plan lessons that provide sufficient support and challenge for different groups of pupils
  - provide helpful feedback so that pupils understand how to correct their mistakes and improve their work
  - have high expectations of the presentation and quality of work that they accept from pupils.
- Improve pupils' personal safety, behaviour and welfare by making sure that:
  - low-level disruption in lessons is eradicated

- disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school as regularly as others
- the learning environment is stimulating and celebrates the achievements of pupils.

■ Ensure that arrangements to keep pupils safe are implemented in full.

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 first monitoring inspection on 11–12 January 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing body. They held discussions with groups of pupils and spoke with pupils during lessons. They also met with a group of teachers. Inspectors observed teaching in a wide range of lessons, making short visits to 33 lessons. Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation, including information on the school's website. They scrutinised records of pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance as well as records relating to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They also scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures and records, including the arrangements for ensuring that the school site is secure.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, four of the assistant headteachers have either left the school or stood down from their leadership posts. Two new assistant headteachers have joined the school. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in September 2017 and new heads of humanities and design and technology are in post. Three new science teachers have joined the school, including a lead teacher for science. The school plans to join the Saint Ralph Sherwin multi-academy trust on 1 September 2018. The chief executive of this newly constituted trust provides support to the senior leadership team.

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

Actions taken since the section 5 inspection have been concerted, well judged and effective. As a result, the school is making good progress towards the removal of special measures. Pupils are benefiting from teaching which is much better than it was. They are learning in an environment where good behaviour is becoming the norm. The school site has been made secure so that pupils are kept safe and feel safe throughout the school day.

The headteacher has shown resilience and determination following the judgement that the school required special measures. He has sought to ensure that his actions and those of other leaders are making the difference needed. In achieving this, he has not hesitated to seek advice, support and challenge from other senior education professionals. The headteacher has also been quick to ensure that others with leadership responsibilities have the knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their roles effectively. This has included restructuring the school's senior leadership arrangements. Robust decisions have been taken when those in post have not shown the capacity to improve their practice quickly enough.

The school's improvement plan is of very high quality. Clear milestones and lines of accountability mean that any slippage in the timing of the planned actions is quickly spotted and challenged. Well-defined success criteria mean that leaders and the governing body can also check whether the actions taken are making the difference intended. Leaders' progress in tackling improvement priorities is set out clearly week by week on whiteboards which cover the walls of one of the leadership rooms. Members of the senior team challenge each other at weekly meetings where actions have slowed. They provide support and ideas for colleagues where strategies have not had the impact intended. This approach has helped create a strong, dynamic and productive senior team. It has enabled all to abide by the 'leadership pledges' they devised following training in leadership development.

Actions taken to strengthen the quality and impact of middle leadership are also proving to be effective. Leaders have ensured that subject improvement plans are closely aligned to the school's key priorities. Regular meetings between line managers and their teams ensure that all staff are sharply focused on quickly bringing about the necessary improvements. Staff who spoke with inspectors reported that the quality of leadership throughout the school has improved very significantly. All staff are clear about the school's priorities for improvement and their individual roles in securing and sustaining improvements.

Leaders quickly commissioned the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium recommended at the time of the section 5 inspection. They have acted quickly to implement its recommendations. Under the skilful leadership of the new leader responsible for this area, staff are ensuring that the additional funding is used more effectively than it was before. Work continues to increase the attendance of disadvantaged pupils but greater emphasis has rightly been given to raising the academic achievement of this group of pupils. As a result of the actions taken, the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils are improving.

The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has improved markedly, particularly since the appointment of an experienced and well-qualified SENCo from September 2017. The new SENCo is making good use of an 'area recovery plan' to remedy previous failings in provision. For example, she is taking steps to ensure that all pupils on the special needs register are receiving the support that they are entitled to. This is no small task, however. So far, the SENCo has given priority to pupils in Years 7 to 9 by developing 'pupil passports' for these pupils which set out how the pupils should be supported in lessons. She has ensured, for example, that pupils with SEN and/or disabilities who entered the school in Year 7 this year are properly assessed and supported. The SENCo is ensuring that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are provided with the support in public examinations that they are entitled to. She is also working to build bridges with the parents and carers of pupils who previously have not been supported well enough. The pace of improvement in provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities now needs to quicken, however, so that leaders can be certain that all pupils entitled to support are receiving it. This includes ensuring that the provision for

each of the pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is regularly reviewed in line with statutory guidance and that the school's policies with regard to special educational needs fully reflect current legislation.

The governing body is playing a much more effective role in supporting and challenging the school. It has made good use of the clear findings from an external review of governance to strengthen key areas of its work, including compliance with statutory duties. The governing body's committees have been restructured and streamlined. Meetings are now scheduled to align more closely to key dates in the school year, such as pupils' assessment points. Additional expertise has also been secured through co-opting an experienced headteacher to the standards committee. The 'Ofsted Executive Committee' enables governors to keep very clear oversight of how well the school is achieving the changes set out in its improvement plan. The clearer and more concise information that governors have requested from the headteacher enables them to check on pupils' attainment and progress much more effectively than they did previously.

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

The weaknesses in the quality of teaching identified at the last inspection are being remedied quickly. A combination of raised expectations from senior staff, good-quality training for teachers and more rigorous quality assurance means that teaching is of much more consistent quality than at the time of the section 5 inspection.

Everyone who teaches at Saint Benedict now knows that they will be held to account for the quality of their teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teachers are expected to identify in their planning the pupils who need – and are entitled to – additional support, and to set out how they will provide this. During the inspection, inspectors saw teachers doing this consistently well, reflecting their much-improved knowledge about pupils' needs. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of assessment to identify gaps in pupils' learning. They are making much better use of seating plans, questioning and other forms of assessment to ensure that vulnerable pupils are not left behind. The quality of day-to-day teaching that these pupils receive has improved significantly.

Staff have also responded well to leaders' raised expectations about the presentation, quality and consistency of pupils' work. The presentation of pupils' work in their books is of better and much more consistent quality than it was. Staff are using the school's new assessment policy consistently. The policy sets out how assessed pieces of work should be followed up by 'boost activities', where pupils take action to improve an aspect of their work. Pupils have quickly got used to this approach and described to inspectors how it had helped them to improve their work.

The previous inspection report noted particular weaknesses in teaching within science and the humanities subjects. Visits to lessons in these subjects and a scrutiny of pupils' work show that teaching in these subjects is better and more consistent than it has been. The pupils who met with inspectors also agreed that the quality of teaching has improved, including where previously it has been weaker. Pupils are pleased that fewer lessons are taught by supply staff than in the past. They said that this has improved their learning, behaviour and progress.

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

Following the section 5 inspection, leaders took immediate action to improve the site's security. They paid particular attention to the area of the school which includes a public right of way. This area is now supervised by staff throughout the school day, with strong systems in place to ensure that duty staff can communicate quickly with other staff in the event of any incidents. The school has run a series of drills to make sure that procedures to be followed in case of an emergency are as effective as possible. Leaders have also strengthened security arrangements by moving the reception area to the front of the school so that the identity of each visitor can be checked before they access other areas of the school.

In discussions with inspectors, all groups of pupils reported that they feel safe. They appreciate the steps taken to improve the site's security and the increased levels of supervision during the school day provided by staff, including senior staff. They also reported that behaviour has improved in lessons and around the school. They indicated that the number of incidents of low-level disruption is much reduced, if not entirely eradicated. The school's data shows that the number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced considerably since the last inspection. This is because leaders have provided training for staff to ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented more consistently. Consequences for poor behaviour are now issued quickly and effectively by staff. The use of 'expectations cards', known among pupils as 'strike cards', has also improved pupils' conduct around the school. Pupils know, for example, that three 'strikes' will result in a detention. Occasional lateness to lessons is mostly a consequence of the school's large site rather than any dawdling. During the inspection, pupils behaved consistently well. Their willingness to behave well made an important contribution to their learning and progress.

Overall attendance remained broadly in line with the national average last year. The proportion of pupils who were persistently absent reduced slightly but remained above average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has also improved since the inspection but it remains below that of other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. A persistent minority of pupils do not attend school regularly enough, however, including pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school has appointed a full-time education welfare officer to help tackle this and has not hesitated to impose financial penalties on the parents of persistent absentees. Leaders know that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school,



particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, remains too high.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Provisional information for 2017 shows that the progress made by pupils in Year 11 was broadly in line with the national average by the end of their studies. This was a similar picture to that in 2016. In 2016, however, the broadly average progress made by pupils overall masked significant underachievement by key groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils of average prior attainment and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Some underachievement remains among these groups of learners, but differences between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally diminished in 2017.

For example, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics improved from being significantly below average in 2016 to broadly average last year. Their progress overall in their best eight subjects combined also improved to be broadly average. Similarly, middle-ability pupils made better progress by the end of Year 11 in 2017 than did similar pupils the year before. Too few middle-ability pupils taking GCSE examinations, however, achieved well enough to achieve the higher grade 5 in English and mathematics combined compared with similar pupils nationally.

The pupils leaving Year 11 identified on the SEN register to be in need of 'school support' made better progress than did those from previous year groups. Their achievement, however, remained too low overall. Leaders know that raising the achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in all year groups remains a key priority.

Achievement in humanities, particularly history, remained poor last year, though some improvements were secured in science. The continued poor achievement in history helps explain why few pupils are entered for the full suite of subjects which lead to the award of the English Baccalaureate. The improved quality of teaching seen in history means that the school is now in a better position to enter pupils for a GCSE examination in history. The curriculum time given to the humanities subjects in key stage 3, however, is currently too limited.

In visits to lessons, inspectors scrutinised the work of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities very closely. They did this to establish whether the improved outcomes in Year 11 are also being seen in pupils' work throughout the school. They found marked improvements in the quality and consistency of work in different year groups and across subjects, and particularly for the groups which previously have underachieved. The quality and consistency of the work produced by disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities improved greatly. This is testimony to the effectiveness of the school's leaders and other staff in bringing about improvements, particularly in the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.

## **External support**

The school has benefited from good support from the headteacher of an outstanding school who is also a national leader of education. He has provided secure advice and guidance to the headteacher and helped to ensure that leadership structures and processes are in place to support the school's improvement. He has also helped to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the work undertaken by the senior leadership team. As the recently appointed chief executive officer of the St Ralph Sherwin multi-academy trust, he is well placed to provide continued support to the school.