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Mrs Zahida Hammond
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hammond

Special measures monitoring inspection of Saint Peter's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit with Carl Sugden, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 March 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2017. 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's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Darren Stewart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - raising the expectations of all members of staff
 - ensuring that teachers make effective use of assessment information to inform their planning
 - improving planning so that topics are explored in more depth and detail
 - employing strategies that engage and motivate pupils more consistently
 - ensuring that teachers provide more effective support for lower-attaining pupils across key stage 3, so that they make rapid progress and secure basic skills in literacy and numeracy
 - consistently correcting errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
 - establishing appropriate structures that provide effective line management and clear lines of accountability
 - holding middle leaders accountable for delivering rates of progress in line with the school's targets
 - using assessment information smartly to identify pupils making slower progress and providing them with additional support that helps them to catch up
 - checking the quality of teaching more assiduously and providing teachers with precise feedback on how to improve their practice and the expectations of all members of staff
 - strengthening the curriculum for teaching fundamental British values, so that pupils are more fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning and their confidence to participate in lessons.
- Implement a strategy to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who miss school more regularly.

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 second monitoring inspection on 13 March 2018 to 14 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching across a range of subjects and year groups, some jointly with leaders. Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school improvement plan and leaders' written reports that evaluate the school's actions to date. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and documents relating to behaviour, exclusions, attendance, teaching and learning and current pupils' assessment information. Inspectors also carried out a review of work in pupils' books from a range of abilities in English, mathematics, science, and other subject areas. Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, two groups of staff and three groups of pupils. Inspectors met with representatives from the school's rapid improvement team.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in December 2017, a new senior leader in mathematics has been appointed. This has brought about much-needed stability in mathematics. The head of English has returned from maternity leave and is providing effective support for colleagues where it is needed. The local management board (LMB) has recently resumed responsibility for operational aspects of the school. The rapid improvement team (RIT) continues to assume responsibility for all other areas of the school. Three new governors have been appointed to add further capacity and skill to the LMB.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring visit, the headteacher has continued with unwavering and resolute determination to improve standards. She is effectively supported by two vice-principals, who have galvanised their areas of responsibility so that standards improve at a much faster pace. Senior leaders are relentless in their pursuit of ensuring that key changes, for example in the behaviour policy and in the consistency in teaching, become firmly and routinely established across the school. As a result, there are clear signs of improvement since my previous visit.

The school's self-evaluation document, complemented by the improvement plan, is enabling leaders to continually have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, senior leaders are much sharper in their analysis of areas of the school where prompt action is needed. For example, recent changes to the curriculum are providing pupils with a more appropriate set of

subjects that closely link with their future aspirations. Such changes are also giving pupils, particularly in Year 11, focused opportunities to attend appropriate sessions to develop their confidence and prepare them for their summer examinations.

The overall quality of school leadership is showing signs of improvement. There is greater clarity of expectation in the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders. Middle leadership is steadily strengthening as senior leaders hold them more readily and regularly to account. A number of middle leaders are now supporting and assisting senior leaders in gaining greater consistency and driving up expectations of behaviour and teaching. For example, leaders in English and mathematics are fully supportive of the headteacher's vision and are determined to continually improve standards in their subject areas and across the school. However, a small minority of middle leaders are yet to effect change as rapidly as others. Where this is the case, standards are not improving as rapidly as they could.

Newly appointed 'directors of progress' are enthusiastic about the changes that are taking place and they fully support senior leaders in their work to drive up standards. As part of their role, they are now taking a lead in monitoring the performance of pupils in their given year groups. Such monitoring is enabling them to grasp a knowledge of key pupils and groups of pupils. Although this role is in its infancy, this group of middle leaders is beginning to work alongside subject leaders to plan and discuss appropriate strategies and interventions to improve pupils' outcomes.

Leaders, along with the RIT, have established clear lines of accountability. Leaders at all levels and staff, therefore, are being held increasingly to account through thorough and detailed monitoring. This is enabling underperformance to be challenged swiftly and effectively. Any member of staff who is not performing in line with the high expectations being established across the school is supported to improve. As a result, this is having a positive impact on improving aspects of the school that need it most.

The vice-principal who has responsibility for the pupil premium funding is ambitious for disadvantaged pupils to succeed. Carefully planned strategies to improve disadvantaged pupils' skills are being initiated. For example, leaders quickly identified that pupils' reading ages were not improving quickly enough. Appropriate programmes of support have been introduced swiftly in order to improve pupils' chronological reading ages. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive advice and guidance, as well as work experience opportunities, that they need to raise their aspirations. Pupils speak highly of this provision. Their ambition and determination to do well in the future is clearly evident.

The RIT and the LMB receive valuable information from senior leaders. They are well aware of the strengths that exist in the school. However, they are particularly aware of, and candid about, the areas that need improving the most. The RIT has been instrumental in supporting the headteacher and holding leaders to account

regarding the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

One point that must be noted is the unwavering commitment that the vast majority of staff have for pupils and to driving up standards. Staff are committed to the headteacher's vision of being a school where all pupils can achieve their very best and experience high-quality teaching and experiences. Leaders acknowledge the journey that staff have been on with them, and they readily encourage staff to share their own ideas and to work alongside leaders to continually effect change.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders are determined to improve teaching so that it is consistently highly effective. Through their regular and thorough checks, leaders are, indeed, gradually ironing out inconsistencies. Although some inconsistencies remain, teaching is showing steady improvement since the previous monitoring visit.

Leaders initiate timely and appropriate support to staff to improve their teaching practice. The professional development and training of staff, particularly around the practice of using 'non-negotiables' in lessons, are paying off. Many lessons are now planned well to impact positively on pupils' learning. More staff are using the 'do now' task at the start of lessons. As a result, increasingly, pupils are immediately engaged and learning gets off to a good start. Most staff present pupils with clear learning objectives. This is used particularly effectively in English, mathematics, history and geography as it is linked to pupils' progression in knowledge, understanding and/or skills. The quality of teaching in music, art and physical education is particularly strong. In these lessons, pupils achieve well, and develop their skills because teachers' expectations are consistently high, and planned activities enthuse and build pupils' confidence. However, this is not yet consistently the case across other subjects.

Arrangements to assess pupils' skills and knowledge and track their progress have recently been revised and strengthened. Information about pupils' performance in Years 10 and 11, for example, is now more accurate and reliable. Teachers are encouraged to use their records from assessing pupils' achievements in order to plan learning effectively. Some teachers use these records to carefully design seating plans and to plan and provide work that meets pupils' varying needs and abilities. However, changes to the school's assessment systems are still fairly recent and, so, this good practice is still not yet embedded and, in some instances, assessment information is not being used appropriately to ensure that pupils' needs are met.

Teachers' skills in questioning pupils are improving. Some teachers have high expectations and so ask questions that are challenging. They strive to build pupils' confidence by asking them to develop and justify their ideas. This is having a positive impact on filling in the gaps in pupils' knowledge and tackling any

misunderstandings quickly. This good teaching practice, however, is not consistently evident.

Pupils agree that teaching is improving. They reported that, typically, teachers now expect more from them and that a wider range of strategies is used to involve them in their learning. Pupils are astutely aware of those teachers that challenge them and have high aspirations for them to succeed but also acknowledge that some do not.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning, observed during the first monitoring visit, continue. As a result, more pupils have an increasing level of engagement in their learning and demonstrate that they want to do well. However, this is let down by a small minority of pupils who are hesitant to become involved in their learning. Leaders are resolute that no pupil will hinder the learning of others.

Routines are clear and they are becoming well established. For example, 'reset' sessions at the beginning of every half term remind pupils of, and reinforce, standards of behaviour and expectations of conduct, such as coming to school with the correct equipment. As a result, an increasing number of pupils are coming to school ready to learn, and move from lesson to lesson prepared to engage in their learning.

Pupils are well supervised. They move around the school site in an orderly manner and safely. They are evidently proud of their school and show this by wearing their uniforms correctly and smartly. Pupils are pleasant and polite to each other and to visitors. Pupils reported that bullying is rare but that, if it did occur, they are confident that a member of staff would deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils are articulate, assured and confident when discussing how to keep themselves safe, particularly how to stay safe online. Pupils said that this is because of planned sessions and the efforts in recent months by staff to educate them about the risks and dangers of social media. Information provided by the school demonstrates effective tracking and monitoring of behaviour incidents. The number of incidents of poor behaviour is reducing, demonstrating that leaders are strategically planning to improve behaviour for learning.

Pupils said that behaviour is much improved. Pupils appreciate the changes that have taken place and understand why the behaviour policy has been reviewed and amended. They reported that fewer lessons are now disturbed.

Leaders and staff are committed to sustaining and improving pupils' well-being. For example, in Year 9 and Year 11 some of the school's most vulnerable pupils are being mentored. These pupils are benefiting from additional support and guidance so that their confidence, communication and social skills develop. This level of commitment from leaders and staff demonstrates their desire to ensure that every

pupil is prepared for future success.

Leaders are well aware that improving pupils' attendance is crucial to improving pupils' outcomes. They check pupils' attendance fastidiously and intervene with appropriate strategies when needed. Attendance is slowly improving. Leaders' actions, along with the support of the family liaison officer, are helping to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Even so, leaders know that the attendance of this group of pupils needs to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the previous monitoring visit, standards in English and mathematics have shown steady signs of improvement. Strong and effective leadership of these subjects is having a positive impact in driving up standards and getting to grips with the areas that need the most work.

Leaders are aware that, historically, outcomes for pupils have not been good enough because of weaker teaching and pupils' low attendance. As a result of current leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching and attendance, current pupils' gains in knowledge, understanding and skills are improving.

Leaders are now securing more accurate assessment information, particularly for Years 10 and 11. As a result, intervention is targeted, and pupils' needs are being increasingly met, so that gaps in knowledge and understanding are addressed at a faster rate than previously. Current assessment information, provided by leaders, indicates that current Year 11 pupils' outcomes are variable. However, leaders are using the time they have left before the summer examinations to maximise opportunities, and accelerate the rates of pupils' progress. Curriculum improvements, such as additional teaching and intervention time in core subjects, is having a positive impact.

Current Year 10 pupils are achieving increasingly well. Leaders acknowledge that they must continue the momentum of improvement so that these pupils achieve what they are capable of by the time they leave school.

Leaders are currently working on improving the quality of assessments for pupils in key stage 3. Arrangements to assess pupils are being revised so that learning is sufficiently challenging and provides pupils with a solid foundation for success at key stage 4. This will be an area of focus at the next monitoring visit.

Although showing steady signs of improvement, the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities still lags behind. Although these pupils are well cared for, teachers are not consistently planning to meet their varying needs.

External support

The school continues to access both formal and informal support from various sources. These include the Talented Leaders and Future Leaders' programmes, Teach First, Dixons Academies Trust, the Outwood Grange Academies Trust and the diocese.

External support continues to provide effective opportunities for leaders to engage in professional and critical dialogue. It enables staff to visit other establishments to gauge and share good practice and to learn from other professionals.