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25 May 2018

Mr John McAuley  
Headteacher  
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Carlisle  
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Dear Mr McAuley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Newman Catholic School**

Following my visit with Philip Wood, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 May 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 January 2017.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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 Lancaster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2017**

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that leaders provide staff with a clear direction so that they know what the school's priorities are and how they will be achieved
  - ensuring that recommendations made as a result of external support are acted upon decisively
  - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they can improve the quality of teaching in their subjects
  - ensuring that pupil premium funding and catch-up funding are targeted effectively to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged and low-attaining pupils.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that the rate of pupils' progress accelerates and outcomes improve by:
  - developing greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning within and across subjects
  - having high expectations of the quality of pupils' work, particularly that of boys
  - using performance information to sharply plan activities that challenge all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, boys and disadvantaged pupils
  - providing well-planned activities for all pupils to improve their speaking and writing skills
  - using questions to make pupils think more deeply and strengthen their understanding
  - ensuring that teachers, including those teaching sixth form, continue to receive and follow advice to improve aspects of their practice.
- Improve pupils' attendance and reduce the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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 9 and 10 May 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Diocese of Lancaster.

Inspectors carried out joint learning walks with senior leaders and observed pupils during lessons and social times. They also undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work across a range of subjects and year groups. Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding policies and practices and checked the single central record. A wide range of documentation was also reviewed, including the minutes of governing body and strategic improvement meetings, pupils' achievement information, behaviour and attendance data, and records of evaluations of teaching. Inspectors scrutinised the records of the external pupil premium review and the external review of governance. Inspectors also considered the 26 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been some changes to staffing. Ten teachers left the school and five teachers have been appointed. New middle leaders for history, Spanish, technology and Year 8 were appointed last year. Two middle leaders have been seconded to the senior leadership team to lead on literacy and Year 11 revision. A new chair of governors was appointed last year. Additional governors have been appointed to broaden the skills and expertise of the governing body. Governors have secured a new site for the school and are in the process of securing funding for a new building.

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

Leaders and governors have responded well to the findings of the previous inspection. They have a clear vision for the school and staff share their high expectations. The headteacher has demonstrated a quiet determination to improve the school. He is well supported by senior leaders and governors. Roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been clarified to ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them. Staff feel positive about the school's future and morale is high. One teacher commented: 'There is strong sense of team spirit amongst the staff.'

The school's action plan provides a clear response to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is overgenerous. Leaders recognise that the school improvement plan

requires further refinement to include new priorities and specific deadlines to enable them to evaluate the impact of their actions more effectively.

Leaders have adopted the recommendations of the pupil premium review. As a result, they have introduced a wider range of interventions for disadvantaged pupils. For example, leaders have employed more additional adults to provide one-to-one support to pupils in a range of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from a range of trips and visits. These actions have begun to diminish the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally across some year groups and subjects. Leaders use Year 7 catch-up funding more effectively to support pupils who enter the school with literacy and numeracy levels that are below those typical for their age. As a result, these pupils are catching up with their peers.

Governors are very committed to the school. They commissioned a detailed external review of governance in January 2017 and have used its recommendations to hold leaders to account more effectively than in the past. Governors have established a 'driving improvement group', which includes a smaller group of governors, the headteacher and the local authority adviser. This group scrutinises the school's work well and challenges leaders to make improvements effectively. Governors are now asking probing questions about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They demonstrate a stronger understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. The chair of governors seeks pupils' views and opinions on standards within the school. He has plans to widen this aspect of work to include more pupils so that appropriate improvements can be made.

Senior leaders have strengthened systems for reviewing subject performance. Middle leaders have benefited from training at a local outstanding school and are improving their skills in monitoring their subject areas. Middle leaders feel well supported by senior leaders and are now held to account more effectively for pupils' progress. Recent middle leadership appointments have improved the leadership of subject areas which had weaker teaching in the past.

Leaders at all levels are checking on the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment more closely through, for example, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. Leaders have ensured that more emphasis has been given to the sixth form than previously. Tough decisions have been made to challenge underperformance and this is beginning to have a positive impact. Senior leaders have put in place coaching programmes for teachers to improve their practice. Staff have completed training in a wide range of topics, including questioning skills. As a result, there is evidence of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Pupils are given some opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through assemblies. However, the curriculum provides limited opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of British values. Pupils in key stage 4 do not have sufficient careers information, advice and

guidance and do not have the opportunity to participate in work experience. Leaders have plans to review the curriculum this year. They recognise the need to implement the recently developed careers strategy and build better links with employers for pupils in Year 8 to Year 11.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The single central record is compliant. Staff training is up to date and staff are able to explain confidently how they would deal with safeguarding issues. The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe and well cared for and would recommend the school to others.

Leaders are focusing on attendance with increased rigour and this is beginning to have a positive impact. Overall attendance has improved slightly but is still below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities remains a key area for leaders to tackle.

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

Leaders have made improving the quality of teaching and learning their top priority. They provide regular opportunities for teachers to share their best practice through morning briefings on Mondays and training events. When asked, pupils say that teaching is improving. Most teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can attain. Teachers, including in the sixth form, are making better use of assessment information to plan activities which are more closely matched to pupils' abilities. However, leaders agree that there is still more work to be done to ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, boys and the most able, are challenged to do the best that they can.

Teachers' use of questioning to deepen pupils' thinking and strengthen their understanding is improving. However, leaders agree that this is uneven across the school. Pupils' relationships with teachers are generally positive. Pupils take more pride in their work, which is neat and well presented.

Leaders have improved the reliability of assessment by using external partners, such as local secondary schools, to check teachers' evaluations of pupils' work. Leaders have placed a greater emphasis on tracking pupils' progress. This enables them to identify pupils who need extra support. Leaders agree that tracking of students in the sixth form by subject and groups would help to improve monitoring further.

Leaders have given literacy a higher profile across the school. Pupils have more opportunities to develop their speaking skills, for example through debating competitions and form periods in key stage 3. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers are giving more attention to improving spelling. However, some pupils make grammatical errors which go unchecked. Leaders acknowledge that there is still work to be done to develop and reinforce pupils' literacy skills, particularly in

extended writing.

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

Leaders have put in place several strategies to improve attendance, including the use of rewards and employing an attendance officer who works closely with families. The impact of this is that the attendance of pupils is improving and is closer to the national average. However, leaders recognise that rates of absence for vulnerable pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is still too high. This remains a significant barrier to raising the achievement of these pupils.

Pupils wear their uniform smartly. They listen well in lessons and show respect for others. Most pupils move calmly around the school site between lessons and during social times. However, inspectors noted that some pupils use inappropriate language to each other.

Most pupils say that bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively by staff. However, a small minority of pupils told inspectors that bullying does happen and that they do not have confidence in the systems to deal with instances of bullying. Leaders are currently taking action to address this issue and to find ways of reassuring these pupils. School records show that numbers of fixed-term exclusions are similar to last year and below the national average.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The improvements in teaching are having a positive impact on pupils' progress across the curriculum. In 2017, the overall progress of pupils in Year 11 improved and was above average. In part, this was because a high proportion of pupils were successful in gaining the European Computer Driving Licence. The school is not entering pupils for this qualification in 2018. Pupils' progress was above average in science. Pupils made broadly average progress in English and mathematics. However, boys did not make as much progress as girls in English. Pupils' progress in modern foreign languages and humanities was below average. Low-ability pupils underperformed in English, mathematics and a number of other subjects.

In 2017, the overall progress of disadvantaged pupils improved and was in line with that for other pupils nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages.

Current assessment information, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4, is variable. Pupils are making better progress in English than last year. However, pupils are not making the progress they should in mathematics, modern foreign languages, humanities and some other subjects. Most pupils are making stronger

progress than previously in key stage 3 across a range of subjects. Leaders acknowledge that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, boys and the most able pupils need to be challenged more to accelerate their progress further.

Teaching assistants support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well in class. However, the progress of this group of pupils is variable across some subjects and year groups.

In 2017, students completing A levels and vocational courses made progress broadly in line with the national average. Nonetheless, progress for both types of courses was in the lowest 40% nationally. Disadvantaged pupils on academic pathways made less progress across a range of subjects than other pupils nationally.

Inspection evidence shows that the progress of students currently in the sixth form is improving but continues to be variable in some subjects. Leaders acknowledge the need to review subject performance against targets. Work scrutiny in some subjects in the sixth form revealed that the information that teachers enter into the reporting system on whether students are on track to reach their targets is not always accurate. Sixth form students who spoke with inspectors said that they receive helpful support with university applications and job interviews. The 16 to 19 study programmes are met. A high proportion of students who left the sixth form in 2017 went on to higher or further education, apprenticeships or employment.

### **External support**

The local authority took steps to ensure that a wide range of effective support was secured following the inspection in January 2017. Local authority officers helped school leaders to devise the action plan and they have also taken an active role in strategy improvement meetings. The headteacher has brokered strong links with Nelson Tomlinson School and Our Lady's Catholic High School, Preston, through which middle leaders and teachers are benefiting from a range of staff training. Additional support for professional development has been provided from a range of experienced advisers, consultants and local schools. The representative from the Diocese of Lancaster provides good support to the headteacher.