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17 July 2018

Mrs Zahida Hammond  
Headteacher  
Saint Peter's Catholic Voluntary Academy  
Normanby Road  
South Bank  
Middlesbrough  
TS6 6SP

Dear Mrs Hammond

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

Following my visit with Toni Spoons, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 July 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 third 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.

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 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
  - 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 third monitoring inspection on 3 July 2018 to 4 July 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed teaching across a range of subjects and year groups, in most cases jointly with leaders. Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school improvement plan, 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 books from pupils with a range of abilities in English, mathematics, science and other subject areas. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and two groups of pupils. Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body, the newly appointed chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust (MAT) and the director of schools for the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit, a CEO has been appointed to lead the newly formed MAT that the school will become a part of from 1 September 2018. The school continues to serve a community with a significantly higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils than seen nationally. At present, the school is fully staffed for September 2018.

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

The headteacher's reflective, compassionate and candid leadership is ensuring that standards in the school continue to improve at the fast pace observed during the previous monitoring visits. Senior leaders continue to have a strong understanding of those areas in the school that need extra attention so that they improve faster.

Senior leaders continue to communicate much higher expectations around the quality of teaching. As a result of well-thought-out and planned professional development, complemented by effective monitoring and support for staff, the quality of teaching is continuing to improve and inconsistencies are being addressed with vigour. Consequently, senior leaders are in a much better position to continue to speed up the progress pupils make, across all year groups and in different subjects.

The vice-principals continue to hold middle leaders rigorously to account for the performance and achievement of the staff and pupils in their subject areas. Systematic checks by leaders are providing staff with the necessary challenge, but also support to address individuals who require more structured support.

Middle leaders' skills have developed, and continue to develop, at a quicker pace because they now have clarity about what their roles and responsibilities entail.

They welcome this clarity and fully understand how important they are in driving up standards and strengthening the leadership capacity in the school. Middle leaders welcome honest and direct professional dialogue with senior leaders, each other and their teams. Consequently, increased layers of accountability for all are evident and are playing a major part in raising expectations and, subsequently, standards. However, senior leaders continue to work with middle leaders, and acknowledge that middle leaders, particularly subject leaders, need to provide a consistency of approach so that change is implemented at a rapid pace in all subjects.

Directors of progress have a sharp eye on their year groups. They are starting to work collegiately as a group and strategically with other leaders to monitor and track pupils. As a result of this work, they hold holistic views of pupils' progress in the subjects they study and pupils' behaviour. Subject leaders continue to find their support useful in ensuring that the rate of improvement in standards in their areas, and across the school, continues at the current pace.

The governing body's 'Rapid Improvement Team' (RIT) continues to be heavily involved in supporting and challenging leaders. As a result, it continues to have a much more accurate view of the strengths of the school and those areas that require further attention. For example, members of the RIT are holding leaders to account regarding the progress of different groups of pupils and examining how staff are using pupil assessment information to inform their planning. As a result, a focus for senior leaders has been to provide training and close monitoring of teaching, so that more staff are readily planning learning that meets pupils' needs sufficiently.

Governance also continues to improve. Governors' skills are developing well and their understanding of different areas of the school is growing as they become further immersed in the wider life of the school. For example, observing the quality of teaching in different subject areas is giving them a first-hand view of current standards.

The leadership of the new trust is forthright and very much aware of the direction of travel, so that further support and challenge is provided to continue to bring about rapid change. This is particularly important so that systems are embedded and the quality of teaching strengthens. Where inconsistencies and variability exist, they are tackled with urgency. The headteacher and other senior leaders welcome this support. They are enthusiastic about how the trust can support their vision of providing the very best Catholic education for their pupils.

Leaders, including governors, continue to place a very high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe and secure in the school. Routines and systems are well established and rigorous. Staff are well trained and have a sound understanding of their responsibilities and what actions they should take if they have any concerns, particularly over those pupils who are vulnerable.

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

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Systematic monitoring, support and constructive dialogue with staff have contributed to eradicating the inadequate teaching that existed in the school. As a result, leaders can now focus on further improving the quality and consistency of teaching, so that it ultimately has a positive impact on improving pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have a clear view of how to recognise stronger practice and they use professional development opportunities for staff to share the good practice that exists in the school. Support from other schools with which leaders are working is also contributing to the improvement of teaching. Staff recognise how expectations have been raised and how professional development opportunities are contributing to them improving and sharing their practice. The majority of pupils who spoke to inspectors also reported how their learning experiences are improving because, in the main, lessons are more engaging.

Teachers' planning is becoming increasingly effective. As a result, most learning is well structured, and an increasing number of activities are well planned to meet the needs of a wider range of pupils. Where planning is most effective, teachers use their subject knowledge well and they are planning activities that allow pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Evidence indicates that an increasing proportion of teachers use pupils' assessment information well and consider pupils' prior learning. However, some teachers do not expect enough of pupils, because their expectations of what pupils are capable of are not as high as those of others. Consequently, pupils' needs are not always met and their progress lags behind others. Because of this, leaders have identified the most able and the most able disadvantaged as priority groups.

The 'do now' activity is a well-used strategy to engage pupils immediately in their learning. In the main, it is being used well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, there is still more work to do to ensure that these activities tap into pupils' prior learning and challenge and extend their thinking and ideas. Where the strategy is having the most impact, for example in some science lessons observed, it is a basis to extend pupils' ideas and their understanding of key concepts.

Teachers' skills in questioning are developing, because they have been given high priority for development, although there are examples where they continue to vary across the school. For example, some teachers are not using questioning to tackle misconceptions pupils have quickly enough. Despite the variability, teachers are becoming increasingly skilled when using questioning to gauge pupils' understanding and develop their ideas.

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to improve. Pupils are more readily engaging in their learning, particularly when learning engrosses and challenges them. They arrive at their lessons on time and they settle quickly to get on with their work in class. Pupils have a growing understanding of how important it is to work hard so that they can gain the best experiences and outcomes possible from their time at the school. This is particularly demonstrated by the increased proportion of pupils in Year 11 applying for academic courses for their next stage of education.

Relationships between staff and pupils are generally strong, and, when pupils work together, they do so cooperatively and fruitfully.

Pupils' personal and social skills are being continually developed, particularly their confidence and resilience. For example, increased pupil participation levels are evident in sporting and musical events, especially for pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium. Pupils and staff are also especially proud of their artistic achievements, particularly this year, as pupils' work is to be exhibited in a local gallery.

Routines are becoming increasingly established, particularly around behaviour. For example, the orderly start to the school day and to lessons through lining up has increased expectations. Pupils respond quickly to staff instructions. Pupils and staff greet and welcome each other with courtesy and respect. Pupils are well presented in their uniforms. They also told inspectors that fewer lessons are disrupted because of poor behaviour, partly because staff are becoming more consistent in their approach to using the behaviour system. Such routines and increased expectations are all contributing to a much more productive and environment that is conducive to learning.

The tireless efforts of leaders are having some impact on improving attendance. However, it remains below the national average overall and for particular groups of pupils, particularly those pupils entitled to the pupil premium. Systems in place and increased monitoring are beginning to have some impact. However, leaders acknowledge there is still some way to go before the importance of good attendance is recognised by pupils and their families.

The work of the internal exclusion base is also having a positive impact for some pupils, so that exclusions are reducing. Inspectors were privileged to speak to pupils where the positive work of the base was evident. These pupils fully appreciated the time and effort staff took to work with them. As a result, they are engaging in their learning and making better progress in most of their subjects.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are improving as a result of better teaching. However, this remains variable. Pupils are now set appropriate,



aspirational targets, and, because of this, teachers and leaders are better able to identify where intervention or support is needed through the monitoring and tracking of their individual performance. Leaders are closely monitoring teachers' assessment practices and the information they have about current pupils' progress, for example through cross-moderation, checking of assessments and work scrutiny. This is so that they have a more thorough understanding of each pupil's progress towards their targets.

Leaders' determination to ensure that all pupils achieve their very best, particularly pupils entitled to the pupil premium, is evident and resonates through the work of senior leaders and directors of progress. However, some gaps still remain in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, and likewise for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Actions are in place to tackle this, but leaders acknowledge it is a marathon and not a sprint.

The work of leaders to accelerate pupils' reading skills, particularly those of pupils entitled to the pupil premium, is developing. Leaders have identified that low literacy levels are a barrier to a high proportion of pupils' success. As a result, they have put strategic plans in place to support, monitor and develop these pupils' reading and wider literacy skills. To date, this work has had a limited impact as its implementation is in its infancy. However, it will be a focus for the next monitoring visit.

A group of staff have been working this year on fresh and interesting research projects. For example, they are analysing the impact of curriculum changes on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Such opportunities are encouraging staff to be more reflective and incisive when measuring the impact of their work to improve pupils' experiences and outcomes.

### **External support**

The headteacher and other leaders continue to secure external support from various sources. This has been particularly helpful in sharing good practice and also providing external reviews and support in identified areas, for example in English. The headteacher continues to welcome this support and challenge, in order to drive standards up in the school and assess fresh and innovative practices to develop the quality of teaching.