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1 February 2019

Mr James Taylor  
Headteacher  
St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy  
Oxford Road  
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West Yorkshire  
WF13 4LL

Dear Mr Taylor

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 9 January 2019, 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 inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in November 2017. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure rapid improvements in the progress and attainment of all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, so that they achieve in line with, or above, national expectations by:
  - ensuring that teachers accurately assess the progress of their pupils and set challenging and appropriate targets for them
  - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of all pupils to behave well and work hard
  - making sure teachers plan learning that enthuses and inspires pupils to want to learn
  - sharing the best practice in teaching and learning from within and from other schools to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to provide more effectively for the needs of their pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - using a wide range of evidence to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the school
  - thoroughly evaluating the impact of the spending of the pupil premium and ensuring that spending results in improvements for disadvantaged pupils
  - working with families and external partners to ensure higher rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils
  - revising the existing improvement plan so that it includes clear priorities, objectives, targets and milestones linked to equally clear success criteria
  - continuing to hold middle leaders more effectively and regularly to account, in particular those leaders of persistently underperforming subjects, such as English.
- Improve the personal development, welfare and behaviour of pupils by:
  - improving the effectiveness of the management of attendance, particularly for those pupils who repeatedly and persistently do not attend and those pupils who attend other providers for a proportion of their education
  - improving the quality of information, advice and guidance in the sixth form.

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 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 9 January 2019**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. A telephone call was held with the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds. A meeting was held with the chair of the trust intervention board, a governor and the national leader of education (NLE) who is supporting the school. The inspector talked informally to pupils during lessons and held a formal meeting with pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. A discussion was also held with a group of Year 12 and 13 students.

The inspector visited some lessons with the acting deputy headteacher and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work with the assistant headteacher. A meeting was held with a group of middle leaders.

During the monitoring inspection the inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school self-evaluation and improvement plan, behaviour, exclusion and attendance records and external reviews, as well as records of staff professional development.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, four new teachers have been appointed. An assistant headteacher has been appointed on a temporary basis to provide additional capacity to the senior leadership team. The chair of the board of trustees has recently taken on the role of the chair of the trust intervention board, following the departure of the previous chair. This is an interim measure and the trust plans to appoint a new chair of the trust intervention board as soon as possible.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Senior leaders and governors are clear about the school's areas of weaknesses. The school improvement plan reflects the main areas for improvement. Leaders and governors review the plan regularly. However, the rate of improvement has not been quick enough since the last monitoring inspection. There remains a considerable amount of work to do to ensure weaknesses are tackled successfully.

Since the last monitoring inspection, an external review of the use of funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been carried out. Leaders have acted on some of the recommendations from the review. For example, leaders have reviewed the pupil premium plan. A more comprehensive plan is now in place. However, leaders have been too slow to act on some of the main recommendations. For instance, leaders have not established the main barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils.

Governors are realistic about the work that still needs to be done. However,

governors do not provide enough effective challenge to ensure rapid improvement is made towards addressing the areas of weakness.

A review of governance is currently taking place.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Middle leaders whom the inspector spoke to support the headteacher's vision to improve the school. They appreciate the opportunities to work with specialist leaders of education (SLEs) to share good practice. Middle leaders are more accountable and involved in checking the effect of new teaching and learning strategies.
- Since the last monitoring inspection, the attendance of students in the sixth form has improved. Students talk positively about the information, advice and guidance they receive about their next steps in education, employment or training. They told the inspector that this helps them to make informed decisions about their future.
- The acting deputy headteacher now monitors the effect of staff professional development on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The quality of teaching is beginning to show signs of improvement in subjects such as history and English. Where teachers have high expectations, pupils take pride in their work, they produce work of a high quality and they are more willing to get involved in class discussions.
- Leaders have raised the profile of attendance. Systems are now in place to monitor pupils' attendance regularly. Form tutors are involved in reviewing the attendance of pupils in their tutor groups. Senior leaders scrutinise attendance trends weekly and analyse the attendance of different groups of pupils. Pupils told the inspector that there are regular discussions about improving attendance.
- The pupils spoken to during the monitoring inspection were polite and courteous. Most said that there is an adult they can talk to in school if they had any worries or concerns. As a result of leaders' actions to improve the standard of dress code, pupils look smart in their uniform. Pupils also report that corridor behaviour has improved.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The pace of improvement remains too slow. The leadership is not having a significant effect on improving the areas of weakness identified at the section 5 inspection in November 2017.
- Middle leaders are not precise enough about the effect of actions taken, resulting in an overly generous view about the quality of teaching and learning and the pace of improvement. They are not clear about the next steps needed to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, there remains too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils told the inspector that the

quality of their learning experience depends on which teacher they have.

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve remain inconsistent. The school's presentation policy, 'proud', is not routinely applied. The quality of pupils' work is too variable. In some subjects, such as history, pupils respond well to the feedback that they receive from their teachers. In other subjects, such as science, pupils' misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough. Subsequently, some pupils continue to make the same errors.
- Leaders implemented a new behaviour policy in September 2018. Pupils understand the sanctions and rewards system. However, many pupils said there remain a significant minority of pupils who disrupt their learning. Pupils told the inspector that they do not hear racist or homophobic language. However, they do hear swearing regularly in school.
- The behaviour support unit, introduced in September 2018, is used for pupils who demonstrate poor behaviour or who are removed from lessons. Such pupils spend part of the school day in a room supervised by a member of staff. School records show that too many pupils are removed to this room multiple times, indicating that this approach is not helping to improve the behaviour of some pupils. Leaders and governors agree that more effective personalised support is needed for those pupils who are regularly removed from lessons.
- Despite the work of leaders to raise the profile of attendance, leaders and governors agree that pupils' attendance remains an urgent priority for improvement. Pupils' attendance has not improved since the last monitoring inspection. The attendance of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, remains too low. The number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are regularly absent from school remains too high. The attendance of pupils accessing alternative education outside of school remains low.
- Senior leaders and SLEs are currently working with teachers to ensure more accuracy of the assessment of pupils' work. The progress made by Year 11 pupils in their GCSE examinations in 2018 was significantly below that of pupils with similar starting points nationally, including the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.

### **External support**

A NLE continues to support the senior leadership team. The NLE conducts regular visits to the school, and the reports produced identify clear next steps for improvement. SLEs have recently reviewed several subjects. Recommendations for improvement have been made. However, it is too early to judge the effect of this work, as the reviews have only recently taken place and have not been shared with middle leaders.