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30 December 2019

Mr Anthony Costello  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Costello

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Savio Salesian College**

Following my visit with Philip Wood, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 December 2019, 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 that 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 February 2019.

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

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs). I recommend that any such NQTs are recruited in appropriate number and are provided with opportunities to access high-quality professional development.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Sefton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Gregory  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2019**

- Ensure that leaders provide effective leadership and urgently improve the quality of education in the school by:
  - developing systematic quality assurance systems
  - routinely evaluating the impact of their actions
  - designing a curriculum that enables all pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding and make the best possible progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
  - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
  - provide the right level of challenge for their pupils, particularly the most able
  - sequence learning in a way that enables pupils to make links with and build on what they already know
  - use questioning effectively to enhance pupils' learning.
- Urgently improve outcomes by ensuring that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able, make good progress in all subjects, especially English, mathematics and science.
- Reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Build on the improvements already made to increase the attendance rate of disadvantaged pupils.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 10–11 December 2019**

### **Evidence**

During this monitoring visit, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' own evaluation of how well the school is performing, Ofsted's review of the local authority's statement of action and leaders' improvement plans.

Inspectors met with the seconded headteacher, the associate headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and a representative from the Archdiocese of Liverpool. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority.

Inspectors spoke with two groups of pupils and two groups of staff. The groups of staff included subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors checked on pupils' work across a range of subjects, including mathematics, science, English, geography and history. Inspectors also visited lessons.

Inspectors discussed matters relating to safeguarding with school leaders. An inspector reviewed leaders' checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, an associate headteacher has been appointed to work alongside the senior leadership team for two days each week. This is a temporary arrangement. Leaders and the chair of governors are not aware whether this support will continue after March 2020.

In addition to the associate headteacher, the seconded headteacher's appointment to the school has been extended for another year. The chair of governors and the seconded headteacher are keen to find a permanent solution to who will be the substantive headteacher of the school. However, little is known about whether this temporary arrangement will continue. This uncertainty in the senior leadership of the school is a barrier to removing the school from special measures.

A new subject leader of mathematics and a new subject leader of science have taken up post since the previous inspection. A head of performing arts was also appointed in September 2019.

An experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed on a temporary basis in October 2019. The SENCo works at the school for two days each week. Leaders have appointed an assistant SENCo to work alongside the temporary SENCo to gain further experience of the role.

### **The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for**

## **improvement identified at the section 5 inspection**

There are some early signs that leaders are beginning to improve the quality of education that pupils receive, but the pace is slow. Some subject leaders have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. These leaders are beginning to ensure that subject curriculums are more ambitious for pupils, particularly in key stage 3. For example, curriculum plans in mathematics are now increasingly well planned and they are appropriately challenging for younger pupils. However, these positive changes to the curriculum have only just been implemented and there is no clear sign of impact on pupils' achievement at this stage. The overall quality of education for pupils remains very poor.

As part of the work to review the curriculum, some subject leaders are also beginning to think about the order in which pupils should learn new knowledge. For instance, in geography, pupils in key stage 3 demonstrated a detailed understanding of their earlier learning. This is because the curriculum in geography in key stage 3 has been designed well. Pupils have a secure understanding of subject-specific words and important content that they have covered already.

Nevertheless, across the school, most curriculum plans are at very different stages of development. In several subjects, curriculum planning is still in its infancy and requires rapid improvement. For example, the key stage 3 science curriculum does not provide teachers with enough information about the most important knowledge that pupils need to know. As a result, pupils continue to underachieve significantly.

Curriculum planning in subjects at key stage 4 remains weak. This is because teachers often rely solely on GCSE specifications to decide what they should teach. These specifications do not provide information about how the curriculum should be adapted for the many pupils who have significant gaps in their learning. This is particularly important, given that many older pupils have not benefited previously from well-designed and well-delivered curriculums in key stage 3. Leaders, including subject leaders, have been too slow to address these weaknesses. Consequently, pupils' achievement remains very poor.

Teachers' use of assessment is not good enough. For example, there are occasions when teachers do not use assessment to identify and address pupils' mistakes. This leads to deep-rooted misconceptions that go unaddressed. Pupils do not have the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed.

To compound this issue, not enough teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, the quality of work in pupils' books across the school remains variable. Some pupils' work is of a low quality.

There are too many subjects where pupils do not achieve well. GCSE examination results for those pupils who left the school in 2019 showed that pupils underachieved significantly in English, mathematics and science. This is also the

case for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have not acted quickly enough to bring about the pace of change required.

Most pupils have a wide range of academic option choices to choose from in key stage 4, including the option to study a modern foreign language. However, leaders do not ensure access to an equally ambitious curriculum for all. For example, some pupils do not have the option to study separate GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics.

Leaders and teachers have been too slow to adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND. As a result, this group of pupils continues to underachieve considerably. However, since October 2019, the temporary SENCo has begun to tackle the weaknesses in this area. For example, teachers now have appropriate information about the needs of this group of pupils. However, leaders do not check whether teachers are using this information well enough. Pupils with SEND continue to be absent from school more often than their peers. They are also more likely to be excluded from school.

Leaders are making every effort to assist staff to manage pupils' behaviour. That said, while pupils say that behaviour systems are clear, younger pupils and some staff report that behaviour is becoming even more challenging. For instance, there remain occasions when pupils' behaviour in lessons disrupts the learning of others. Leaders' recent information about pupils' behaviour indicates that it is getting worse.

Staff do a great deal to support individual pupils to improve their attendance. There are some tentative improvements in this area. However, there are still too many pupils who do not attend as often as they should. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' poor attendance is an additional factor that contributes significantly to their weak achievement.

The school has been the subject of a directive academy order from the regional schools commissioner since November 2016. So far, there has been little progress made towards gaining academy status. Delays in securing academy status have prevented leaders from taking the necessary action to secure the removal of special measures. It has also resulted in the school not having access to much-needed emergency funding until very recently.

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

While leaders at every level are working together to raise standards, there remains a substantial amount of work to do. The uncertainty in the current leadership arrangements is leaving the school in limbo. Consequently, the quality of education for pupils remains extremely weak. Leaders and governors are frustrated by the indecision around the school's future. That said, the temporary appointment of the associate headteacher has strengthened the senior leadership team by adding

capacity.

Governors are acutely aware of the extent of the school's weaknesses. The chair of governors uses his breadth of experience to challenge leaders. However, some governors do not demonstrate the skills needed to improve the school at the pace required. While every effort is being made to focus governors' meetings on the most urgent priorities, governors are unable to resolve school's current situation by themselves.

Senior leaders' plans to improve the school focus closely on the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. They know the school well and the challenges that it faces. However, their planned actions to bring about improvements are not sharp enough or fast enough. Leaders' actions are unlikely to have the desired effect within the given timeframe. For example, targets to improve pupils' attendance have already been missed.

Staff continue to speak positively about the support that they receive from the seconded headteacher and other senior leaders. A group of trainee teachers appreciate the support they receive from staff across the school. Leaders recognise that they need to monitor carefully how well these trainees are supported.

Leaders' systems to monitor and check on the quality of education are not consistently effective. For example, discussions between senior leaders and subject leaders do not focus precisely on those areas of the curriculum that need to improve.

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

- The seconded headteacher has worked to repair many of the broken relationships between staff and senior leaders. Staff now feel they are supported well by senior leaders.
- Since her appointment in October 2019, the new SENCo has quickly ensured that teachers have access to important information about pupils with SEND.

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

- Subject curriculum plans across the school are not good enough. Some curriculum plans do not provide teachers with enough information about the content that they should cover.
- Leaders have been unable to secure enough improvements in how well pupils achieve across the curriculum. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders have been unable to secure enough improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance since the previous inspection.

## **External support**

The level of external support that the school has received to date remains insufficient. Emerging signs of improvement in the quality of education are simply too little and too late for many pupils.

The local authority has provided very little support to the school since the previous inspection in February 2019.

More recently, the Archdiocese of Liverpool Secondary School Improvement Trust has been established to support schools causing concern within the archdiocese.

The school was able to secure emergency funding from the Department for Education in October 2019. The Archdiocese of Liverpool has begun to use this funding to secure additional support for the school.

A local teaching school within the Archdiocese of Liverpool provides up to six days' support to each subject area. This support is helping some subject leaders to improve the quality of curriculum plans, for example in mathematics. The Archdiocese of Liverpool has also secured an associate headteacher to provide support for senior leaders for two days each week. Some staff also benefit from support provided by an external consultant. However, this only started in recent months.