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8 January 2020

Mr Michael Burns
St Patrick's Catholic College, A Voluntary Catholic Academy
Baysdale Road
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Dear Mr Burns

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic College, A Voluntary Catholic Academy

Following my visit with Bernard Clark, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17–18 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 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 May 2018. 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Stockton-on-Tees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018

- Urgently act to develop a culture of safeguarding in the school, by:
 - improving pupils' behaviour, particularly when they are between lessons and during breaktimes and lunchtimes
 - ensuring that all pupils, and especially disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), attend school and sustain high rates of attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make swift progress and outcomes improve, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers provide pupils with work that builds on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding in order to deepen their thinking
 - teachers make use of accurate assessment to plan engaging and challenging activities for pupils, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged pupils
 - teachers apply the school's assessment policy consistently to provide timely guidance for pupils so that they are aware of their next steps.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that all pupils make good progress, by ensuring that:
 - leaders evaluate the impact of their actions effectively in order to accurately identify priorities for further improvement
 - improvement plans identify clear and precise actions, including measurable criteria for success, along with meaningful and manageable timelines
 - all teachers receive the appropriate professional development to develop their skills in the effective use of information about pupils' prior attainment so that they can plan learning to match pupils' different abilities
 - additional funding, such as pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up and the funding to support pupils with SEND, is used effectively and that the impact of this funding on the outcomes of pupils is monitored rigorously by leaders and governors
 - governors hold school leaders to account through monitoring and checking processes that measure impact as well as actions.

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 funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 December 2019 to 18 December 2019

Evidence

We observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the new headteacher. We also met a range of staff from across the school. Inspectors also talked to groups of pupils in meetings, in lessons and around the school site. Inspectors met the chair and vice-chair of the interim advisory board (IAB). Inspectors talked to the chief executive officer of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust. We also worked with the standards officers and subject directors from the trust. Inspectors explored behaviour with pupils and staff. We also considered information on attendance. In this visit, we looked in particular detail at aspects of the curriculum in English, mathematics and science.

Context

A new headteacher took up post on 21 October 2019. In addition, the trust appointed a standards officer in July 2019. In September 2019, trust subject directors for English and mathematics took up their posts. These colleagues are working with senior leaders and subject leaders to improve the quality of education.

In January 2020, a further six teachers will join the school. These include three teachers of English, a science teacher and an art teacher. An additional senior leader will also join the trust and be based at the school.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

The new headteacher has taken significant strides in a short space of time. The trust has made important new appointments. A standards officer now oversees improvements in the quality of education. Subject directors in English and mathematics are working with subject leaders and teachers in school. This is improving the quality of planning. It is also improving aspects of teaching and assessment. While there is still a long way to go, the momentum for change has increased.

These appointments came too late to arrest a decline in progress for Year 11 pupils in summer 2019. In the first year following on from inspection, leaders had been unable to improve the quality of education with sufficient urgency. Although behaviour was better, teaching remained highly variable.

This picture is now changing. Long-term plans are being complemented by urgent actions to support Year 11 pupils. Much stronger systems are in place to check pupils' progress and the quality of education. When areas of underachievement are identified, swifter action is being taken to provide support.

Subject directors are working with subject leaders to improve the curriculum. They have already taken practical steps to change what pupils learn over time. New systems for lesson planning and assessment are being introduced. They have raised expectations of the quality of work required of pupils. These changes are relatively new. There remains much variability in how well they are being implemented. However, support is now in place and staff training is ongoing.

The improvements in behaviour and safety identified in previous monitoring visits have continued. The headteacher has further refined behaviour systems. All of the pupils we talked with said behaviour was better. Senior leaders are much more visible at lesson times, breaks and at the end of the school day. Pupils feel reassured by this. Leaders can now work with pupils to address poor behaviour before it escalates. This improving atmosphere is reflected in significant reductions in incidents of exclusion from school for poor behaviour.

Leaders have made the school site safer. Movement on corridors is calmer and more effectively supervised. Split lunchtimes and breaks have led to better site management. There has been a drastic reduction in serious incidents causing injury. Leaders and teachers take purposeful action to help pupils leave the site as safely as possible. The headteacher has commissioned support from the local authority to further improve traffic safety outside the school.

Leaders' actions to improve attendance have been less successful. Despite over 400 home visits, overall attendance actually fell at the end of last year. The headteacher is currently reviewing attendance support. This is a major priority for the new year. Despite improvements in teaching and leadership, too many pupils are absent.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement. He wants all pupils to succeed. In just eight weeks, he has made a number of important changes. He has brought in new systems to check pupils' progress and the quality of education. Prompt action is now being taken to support pupils who fall behind. His team holds weekly meetings to check on the most vulnerable pupils. The members of the senior team are working more effectively together.

The headteacher is developing the quality of senior leadership. He has made sure that his team is much more visible around the school site. As a result, staff and pupils feel more supported. Senior leaders will not accept bullying or poor behaviour. Pupils largely accept the clarity of new behaviour systems.

The trust has built its capacity. Its own standards and subject officers are helping teachers' planning and assessment. Staff receive regular training and resources to implement the curriculum. Much still needs to be done to implement this training in the classroom. Nevertheless, all of the staff we talked to said that they were receiving better support.

The IAB is working with renewed urgency to ensure improvement is more rapid. The chair has added expertise to his team. His team carries out regular checks of the school's work ahead of its review meetings.

Leaders are developing better links with parents and carers. Two thirds of parents recently attended an event to support Year 11 pupils with their revision. Regular newsletters are drawing attention to many positive aspects of the school's work. Senior leaders and the chair of the IAB hold regular forums with parents. Staff said that they receive fewer objections from parents when they issue sanctions, such as detentions. This is because more parents appreciate the culture leaders are building. Leaders are building a positive atmosphere through increasing praise and rewards. Pupils are accessing more clubs and after-school activities. Pupils' successes are shared through the school's developing use of social media.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The headteacher has increased the pace of improvement. There is increased urgency in actions to improve the curriculum and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils' behaviour has continued to improve. The school site is safer and calmer. Pupils and staff value the heightened presence of leaders.
- The trust is providing better training. This is improving the quality of the curriculum. Teachers are planning lessons to help pupils to learn more over time.
- The trust has increased its leadership capacity. Specialist teachers have been appointed. The school now has greater capacity for improvement.
- Subject directors are improving the quality of the curriculum in English and mathematics.
- New enrichment opportunities are contributing to pupils' wider development.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The lack of urgency identified in the previous monitoring inspection contributed to a decline in results for Year 11 pupils in summer 2019.
- Despite improvements in behaviour, leaders have been unable to raise attendance. The headteacher is reviewing attendance strategies, but this remains a major area of weakness.
- Despite better training and support, the quality of teaching remains highly variable.

External support

Leaders are working with outstanding schools to build subject expertise. Teachers value the opportunity to see stronger practice in action. Leaders have worked with

other trusts to develop systems to check pupils' progress and the quality of education. Leaders are using the expertise of local authority officers to strengthen governance.