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Giselle Lynch
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lynch

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School

Following my visit with David Hampson and Kathleen Harris, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 23 and 24 June 2021, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered 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 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 Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for St Helens. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Emmett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 June 2021

Context

Since the additional monitoring inspection in January 2021, governance, leadership and staffing have remained stable. There have been no changes to the school's status. However, the governing body, local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool have appropriate plans in place to meet their duty to facilitate the school's conversion to an academy.

At the time of this inspection, all pupils in Year 7 and Year 9 were self-isolating and learning at home. A number of staff, including all of the staff in the science department, were also self-isolating. Year 11 pupils were not attending school. This group of pupils left the school at the end of May 2021.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Leaders' actions are having a considerable positive impact on many aspects of the school. In particular, leaders' actions have led to marked improvements in the quality of education that pupils receive.

Prior to the pandemic, governors and leaders took appropriate action to ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), benefit from a broad and suitably ambitious curriculum. Pupils now spend more time studying subjects such as modern foreign languages (MFL), geography and history than they did previously. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the number of pupils opting for these subjects at GCSE.

Throughout the pandemic, subject leaders have created curriculum plans that are appropriately ambitious. These plans outline clearly what pupils need to learn and when. For example, in mathematics, pupils learn basic rules of algebra before learning how to rearrange more complex formulae. However, curriculum plans in some subjects are at an earlier stage of development. These subject leaders continue to receive appropriate support to improve curriculum plans further.

Where subject leaders' work to implement curriculum plans is more advanced, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, learn well. For example, in art, pupils develop an increasingly complex knowledge of colour, shading and texture. In subjects where the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development, pupils' learning is less secure. For instance, in MFL pupils in Year 7 do not gain a deep enough understanding of grammar.

At the time of the monitoring inspection in January 2021, the pandemic had limited subject leaders' checks on curriculum delivery. Subject leaders are now working with teachers to support them to deliver the curriculum well. For instance, subject

leaders are helping teachers to better support pupils to remember important content. Teachers work together to learn from each other's expertise.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) supports teachers to ensure that they plan work that is appropriately challenging for pupils with SEND. The SENCo is also continuing to develop teachers' skills in supporting this group of pupils to access the curriculum.

Subject leaders have started to strengthen the way in which teachers check on pupils' learning. Many teachers use assessment well to identify the missing building blocks in pupils' knowledge. However, in some subjects, assessment does not help teachers to check on pupils' understanding of important facts and key concepts. This means that, on occasion, teachers are unable to help pupils to rectify misconceptions, embed important content and develop their understanding.

Leaders have acted swiftly on inspectors' more recent recommendations to develop teachers' ability to identify those pupils who struggle with reading. A group of staff have received training in an appropriate phonics programme. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen support for the weakest readers across the school. However, this work is in its very early stages. In addition, there is more to do in helping pupils to develop a love of reading.

Leaders have raised their expectations of pupils' conduct in lessons and around the school. Leaders continue to help staff deal with poor behaviour more effectively. Pupils and staff stated that behaviour in lessons and around school has improved considerably. Staff feel that leaders support them to manage pupils' behaviour well. These positive actions have led to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions. Despite leaders' positive work to improve behaviour, a considerable proportion of pupils remain concerned about the unacceptable language used by some of their peers.

Beyond the academic curriculum, leaders provide pupils with a range of opportunities. These include participation in arts awards, poetry competitions, mathematics challenges and chess club. Pupils value these opportunities. However, pupils do not benefit from a well-sequenced and coherently planned curriculum in personal, social and health education. For example, pupils have limited opportunities to learn about protected characteristics and the negative impact that discriminatory language has on others. Leaders plan to consult with parents and carers on their policy relating to relationships and sex education.

Since Year 11 pupils left the school, some of them have continued to attend lessons to complete controlled assessments or access pastoral support. In addition, leaders continue to provide Year 11 pupils with support to prepare them for the next stage of education, employment or training.

Governors understand their role in driving forward school improvement. They have used the findings from an external review of governance to strengthen their own

expertise in holding leaders to account effectively. Governors now have a better oversight of the single central register and the safeguarding of vulnerable pupils than they did previously. Governors provide a suitable level of challenge and support around leaders' work to develop further subject curriculums.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They report that governors and senior leaders support their workload and well-being effectively. Staff across the school have benefited from a wide range of training to improve their subject expertise.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose.

Additional support

Leaders appreciate the range of challenge and support from the local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool. This includes support to strengthen senior leaders' safeguarding and behaviour procedures. Subject leaders have benefited from support from specialist advisers to develop their curriculum expertise. Leaders reported that a wealth of additional support is helping to strengthen the school's leadership at every level.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with a group of senior leaders, a group of subject leaders and a group of teachers. The lead inspector also met with representatives of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the local authority and those responsible for governance, to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring inspection.

Inspectors met with groups of pupils from Years 8 and 10 to talk about their work and experiences of school life. Inspectors visited a range of lessons in art, MFL, mathematics, English and music, and reviewed wider samples of pupils' work.

Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation, including leaders' improvement plan, a selection of minutes from meetings of the governing body, and subject leaders' curriculum plans. Inspectors also considered 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 20 free-text comments, and 42 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.