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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Sarah Wilkinson
Headteacher
St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy
Oxford Road
Dewsbury
West Yorkshire
WF13 4LL

Dear Miss Wilkinson

Special measures monitoring inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit with Elizabeth Creswell, Gillian Hemming and Rebekah Taylor, Ofsted Inspectors (OI) to your school on 15 and 16 March 2022, 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 May 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. We discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken it into account in our evaluation.

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

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust, 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 reports website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 March 2022

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2021, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed to the senior leadership team. The trust's director of secondary standards has been working with the school since September 2021. The trust has put in place a local governing body. This is called the academy council.

The pandemic has continued to have an impact on staff's absence. This has affected the work leaders are doing to improve behaviour.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Following the monitoring inspection of June 2021, leaders and the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust have acted with determination to develop curriculum plans. Plans in many subject areas are clear and sequenced, so prior knowledge is developed and built on. For example, in science, pupils recall prior learning and can explain key concepts such as naming the parts of a cell. Yet, leaders recognise there is still some work to do in wider subject areas. Leaders do have appropriate plans in place to address this.

Senior leaders are working with faculty leaders to put in place and review the new curriculum plans. The school is monitoring how the plans are being delivered in lessons. Leaders are clear that they want to ensure pupils learn and remember key knowledge.

In English, mathematics, science and physical education, pupils are using subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to work independently in lessons. Whole-school expectations such as this are being enhanced as curriculum plans are refined.

Integral to the school's curriculum plans is assessment. Teachers use assessment in class and are quick to address misconceptions. The use of assessment to inform changes to curriculum plans and lesson delivery is not yet embedded.

The school supports pupils who need help in reading. Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders are assessing pupils on arrival at the school in a way that provides a detailed profile for each pupil. The information from the assessment is used to plan and provide bespoke support. Staff involved in supporting pupils have received training. However, this training has not been delivered to all subject staff.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported by a dedicated team of staff. Supporting pupils with SEND is a key strand in staff's training. This has been led by the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo). All staff receive information about pupils with SEND. The SENDCo then carries out activities to check the quality of support pupils are receiving in different lessons.

Some pupils, parents and staff are concerned about behaviour. Leaders know improvements in behaviour are required. Pupils spoken to feel the recent changes to the behaviour policy and increased staffing are having a positive impact. However, leaders realise consistency and fidelity of approach by all staff to the policy is a focus for the school moving forward.

Pupils' learning in class is at times prevented by low-level disruption. The school keeps records of behaviour incidents and uses the information to offer support and intervention.

Leaders have taken steps to strengthen staffing and systems linked to attendance. Pupils who have poor attendance are known. Staff are working with families to encourage these pupils to attend school more regularly. Leaders have positive relationships with external agencies that can provide help and support to families.

The school is outward-looking. Professional development opportunities are linked to priority areas. The support from the trust and the diocese is appreciated and well received. Professional development is planned. It includes whole-school and subject-specific content. Staff feel encouraged to attend professional development opportunities and are given time to reflect on the experience before sharing it with colleagues. The link training has to roles and responsibilities in school is appreciated by staff.

The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable. Training for staff is regular and contains national and local contextual information. Staff are clear safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Parents and pupils have been invited to share their views on different issues. For example, the use of inappropriate language. The responses helped inform curriculum content decisions, assemblies and staff's support at breaktimes.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is planned and delivered by a dedicated team of staff. The content is complemented through deliveries in assemblies and drop-down days. Pupils enjoy a careers program within the PSHE curriculum. Pupils receive impartial careers advice. Extra-curricular opportunities are offered after school. Pupils sign in at one central point and go off to attend their chosen activity. The pupils who access the clubs are monitored and tracked by leaders.

Leaders are reflective and honest in their assessment of the school's progress. The improvement plan is well informed and has been refined since the previous monitoring inspection. Leaders and staff understand the priorities of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- ensure the behaviour policy is clearly understood and consistently applied by all staff.

Additional support

Leaders have benefited from the support of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust. The senior leadership team has been increased, helping to provide additional

capacity. The local authority is continuing to provide support for improving attendance.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors also met pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance.