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Christopher Hammill
Headteacher
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North End
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Dear Mr Hammill

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of St Leonard's Catholic School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 17 January 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school had received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, a representative from the multi-academy trust, and governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo), the assistant headteacher in charge of reading and members of the pastoral team. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

St Leonard's Catholic School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed five additional members of staff to the senior leadership team. The headteacher was in post at the time of the last inspection.

You and your leaders have prioritised improving the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have ensured that the SEND register is up to date and that the statutory reviews of pupils with complex needs have taken place. The SENDCo is well supported by colleagues from the multi-academy trust. Following the

previous inspection, leaders accepted the need to improve communication with parents and carers and have taken steps to do so. Leaders are now more proactive in dealing with the concerns of parents. Leaders are not complacent and are continually reviewing and refining their strategies to ensure that relationships with some families improve further. Teachers receive information and training on how to support pupils with SEND. They make good use of this in the classroom to support pupils well. However, there is more work to do to involve the SENDCo in monitoring the impact of this support across the curriculum.

A newly appointed senior leader oversees the teaching of reading at the school. As a result, several strategies to develop the approach to reading have been introduced but are not established. Leaders have implemented a tiered approach to support pupils who struggle with reading. Leaders have identified the pupils who need additional help with reading and the number of pupils who are accessing support to improve their reading fluency is starting to grow. However, a small group of pupils who need to develop their phonics knowledge have not been able to access the most effective support.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned. The order in which content is taught builds on previous learning. Leaders have introduced new resources to create greater consistency in how lessons are taught. Leaders make regular checks on how well the PSHE curriculum is being delivered. Since the previous inspection, leaders have consulted with parents about the content of the relationships and sex education curriculum and are now compliant with their statutory requirements.

Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve the school. They are well supported by those responsible for governance and the multi-academy trust. Increasing the capacity of the senior leadership team has meant that roles and responsibilities have been clearly allocated to staff. This is enabling leaders to become more effective in improving the school. School improvement plans need to be more robust. They do not identify how school leaders will monitor the actions they have taken. Governors monitor the impact of leaders' actions closely through the introduction of link governors meetings and visits.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for County Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Voyce
His Majesty's Inspector