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14 July 2023

Karl Mackey
Headteacher
St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy
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Dear Mr Mackey,

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 15 June 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders and representatives of the multi-academy trust 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 scrutinised a range of documents relating to safeguarding, attendance and pupils' behaviour. I visited lessons, spoke to a range of pupils and observed break and lunchtimes. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and several other staff are new to post. The headteacher joined the school in April 2023. New appointments to the senior leadership team have been made to increase capacity at the school, though at the time of inspection these staff had not joined the school. The focus of this first monitoring

inspection was to evaluate the impact of leaders' work to improve safeguarding procedures and pupils' attendance. I also considered your work to improve the behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

You have strengthened your attendance procedures to ensure that all pupils are accounted for throughout the school day. Staff working in the attendance team have received additional training. You have strengthened the processes for monitoring and acting upon poor attendance. As a result, those pupils who do not attend school regularly are being monitored and receive stronger sanctions. You have communicated to parents the importance of regular school attendance. Vulnerable pupils are a priority to leaders. When they are absent from school, daily checks are made on their well-being and whereabouts. Systems and processes for safeguarding pupils who are absent from school are now effective. However, rates of attendance are still too low. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders have focused on creating strong relationships between pupils and staff. They know that this is critical to improving behaviour at the school. Senior leaders model high expectations, and staff feel well supported to challenge poor behaviour. In most of the lessons I visited, the relationships between pupils and staff were strong. Those staff who lack confidence to manage pupils' behaviour are receiving additional support. As a result, the number of pupils removed from lessons has reduced significantly. Pupils agree that their lessons are beginning to be disrupted less by poor behaviour. However, the way in which behaviour is managed across the schools still lacks consistency.

You know that behaviour around the school building is more challenging. You have increased the number of staff on duty during pupils' social times and movement between lessons. I spoke with pupils who commented that they now feel safer moving around the school building. Despite this, I witnessed boisterous behaviour and defiance from a small number of pupils. You recognise that some pupils still struggle to regulate their own behaviour. Specific support is in place for these pupils, some of whom do not currently attend their timetabled lessons. A personalised programme has been developed to help them quickly reintegrate into school once their behaviour has improved.

Truancy remains a challenge for leaders. Many pupils I spoke to said that there were now fewer pupils out of lessons on a regular basis. This has reduced disruption to their learning. However, leaders' records show that this is still a significant issue at the school. You have taken action to improve site security and monitoring of corridors. This is beginning to have an impact on reducing truancy, but you acknowledge there is more to do.

Leaders within the Trust have supported you to increase leadership capacity at the school. This has been through both new appointments to the leadership team and by commissioning a review of the school's approach to managing behaviour and attendance. This work is at an early stage but has highlighted some important areas for development. You have used these findings effectively and begun to create new policies and procedures. However, this work is at an early stage. Governance of the school has been

significantly strengthened. Leaders are now regularly held to account for the progress made against improvement plans. Despite this, much work remains to be done to achieve the improvements leaders know are required.

You understand the importance of pupils' personal development. The curriculum that pupils receive is varied and age-appropriate. You have ensured that important messages about staying safe online and in person, diversity, British values and living a healthy lifestyle form part of this curriculum. However, you know that some of these messages are not well understood by all pupils. You intend to increase the focus on some aspects of pupils' wider development, such as living a healthy lifestyle, by bringing about specific changes at the school. For example, you understand that pupils need healthy food choices and that sitting down to eat together is important. You plan to use these opportunities to strengthen the community ethos of the school. Implementation of these plans is at an early stage.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely,

John Linkins
His Majesty's Inspector