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Phillip Maxfield
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mr Maxfield

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 18 and 19 October 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 require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in January 2023.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, including the chief accounting officer (CAO) of the 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 visited lessons, met with staff and pupils, observed behaviour in lessons and around the school, and reviewed school documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to be no longer judged as requiring special measures.

I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders take proactive steps to ensure that pupils are safe. Safeguarding is prioritised at trust and staff meetings. You have sought external and internal support to help you ensure that there is an effective safeguarding culture in the school. You have quickly acted on recommendations that have been made. Your record-keeping and the actions you take to keep pupils safe are regularly checked to ensure you respond to concerns in a timely and appropriate manner. Staff are all well trained and confident in following the school's safeguarding procedures. You make sure that staff training, and communication, is frequent and on-going.

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new acting headteacher and restructured the senior leadership team to include two new phase leaders. This has increased leadership capacity. In addition, leaders have sought advice and support from a wide range of staff from both within the trust and externally.

The school's curriculum for early reading is now being implemented to a much higher standard. You recognise that previously the monitoring of the quality of early reading provision was not sufficiently robust. There has been an increase in staff training to ensure that the phonics sessions are now of a higher quality. You ensure that checks on the quality of the teaching happen regularly. You are quick to intervene when there are areas that need improving. Teachers now use the information they gather more accurately to inform the type of support required when pupils fall behind. This work should continue to be a high priority to ensure that pupils who remain behind catch up with their phonics knowledge.

Work to strengthen the English curriculum has begun. You have appointed a new subject leader. Through your regular monitoring, you have recognised where some pupils are not doing as well as they should. For example, sometimes they are not given sufficient opportunities to practise the smaller components of successful writing, such as punctuation or handwriting skills, before they attempt longer writing tasks. You have appropriate plans in place to develop the implementation of the curriculum to address this.

In mathematics, you have made significant improvements to the quality of provision. You have appointed a new subject leader and introduced more effective monitoring of the curriculum delivery. You have ensured that this monitoring results in actions, such as staff training which is linked to areas that need improving. This has helped to ensure greater consistency in teaching quality. There remains significant work to be done to address historic weaknesses which have led to gaps in pupils' knowledge. You recognise that you need to prioritise the support you provide so the mathematics leader can build on this promising early work.

You have made considerable progress in improving the wider curriculum and have introduced new schemes of learning for the majority of subjects. You recognise that while there have been notable improvements, there is more work to do in your curriculum

planning. You correctly recognise that some plans have not identified sufficiently clearly what the main skills and knowledge are that pupils need to grasp. This means that where teachers are not clear about the key learning, they do not always provide pupils with the most suitable tasks in lessons – or for homework – to help them achieve highly.

The trust is providing you with effective support. The two separate advisory boards that have been set up provide high-quality, constructive advice and challenge. You are benefiting from the guidance of trust staff who have specific expertise in areas that were identified as needing improvement. For example, the quality of provision in early years has been greatly strengthened by additional support around curriculum planning. You have accurately identified that there is further work to be done on strengthening children's communication and language skills. You have quickly arranged additional staff training to address this.

Your work on the accurate identification and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is having a positive impact for many pupils. You have now developed appropriate systems to accurately identify pupils who may have SEND. These are being used well. The support plans that you create for staff are largely in place. Effective training means that staff are now confident in following these plans. They provide pupils with work that is well matched to their needs. You have identified that there is some further work needed to improve the quality of the targets so you can more accurately monitor the steps of progress that pupils are making. You recognise that while the SEND register is now largely accurate, there are a small number of pupils who are still awaiting assessment and have plans in place to address this in a timely manner.

You have successfully addressed issues relating to pupils' poor behaviour that were identified in the previous inspection. There is now a clearly understood behaviour policy in place. Staff and pupils are positive about the impact of this policy. You have ensured that pupils now feel, and are, safe. Bullying or unkindness are very rare. You ensure that these issues are dealt with promptly and effectively if they happen. Pupils follow rules and routines and are keen to do well. They feel that teachers are fair in how they implement the rules. Pupils are polite and friendly, and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. You recognise that a small minority of pupils struggle to manage their feelings. These pupils are successfully given additional support to help them to settle.

You have taken steps to strengthen your personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. This has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils regularly demonstrate key values, such as respect. A new PSHE leader has been appointed and you are in the process of implementing an enhanced curriculum which covers a wider range of essential skills and knowledge that pupils need. Your plans recognise that there is more to do. There are still too many gaps in pupils' knowledge. Sometimes their understanding of important topics is missing or superficial. You have plans in place to address this.

Leaders have sought and received appropriate external support. School staff are very positive about the impact of this support. They value the guidance and recommendations

that have been given. Staff are positive about the school and feel their well-being and workload are considered.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CAO of the Assisi Catholic Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Brentwood, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Bessie Owen
His Majesty's Inspector