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Mr Karl Mackey
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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 that took place on 11 June 2024, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 2022.

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, other senior leaders and the chief executive officer (CEO) 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 scrutinised a range of documents relating to safeguarding, attendance and pupils' behaviour. I spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, reviewed a sample of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their experience at school. 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 having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous monitoring inspection, you have appointed several new members of staff, including middle leaders. In addition, you have made other new appointments who were yet to commence their posts at the time of this inspection. The trust has also recently appointed a new CEO. The focus of this third monitoring visit was the quality of education pupils receive as well as leaders' work to improve pupils' attendance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

You have continued your relentless focus on improving pupils' attendance. This has led to positive improvements for many pupils. Younger pupils, in particular, now understand your expectations around attendance and come to school regularly. Rates of persistent absence have improved. Despite this positive trend, some groups of pupils are still persistently absent from school. Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium have particularly high rates of persistent absence. You acknowledge that this must be addressed at pace to ensure all pupils benefit from the education on offer at the school.

You have maintained your determination to improve standards of behaviour at the school. This has led to a reduction in removals from lessons, as well as less truancy around the school building. The changes you have made have minimised the disruption to learning. Pupils and staff are positive about the impact of these changes on their experience at school. Teachers can now teach without interruption in most lessons. However, some pupils continue to pose a challenge for you. This small group of pupils are not meeting your high expectations and continue to be removed from lessons or suspended from school. Although rates of suspension have reduced, they are still high and you acknowledge this needs to improve. A new rewards system is planned to support your expectations and create a positive ethos throughout the school.

You have increased the school's focus on the quality of education pupils receive. You recognise this is not good enough in some subjects. Curriculum leaders are reviewing and refining plans in these subjects to better reflect the context of the pupils who attend the school. In other subjects, such as design technology, more significant changes have been required. The school still needs to set out the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary it expects pupils to learn in these subjects. In addition, you recognise that your approach to assessment is not consistent across the school. Staff do not always identify what pupils do, and do not, remember about what they have been taught.

In the past, deficiencies in the school's curriculum and the disruption caused by poor behaviour have led to pupils experiencing a poor quality of education. This is reflected in previous examination results and the progress pupils make from their starting points. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils who perform less well than their peers. More recently, pupils' educational experience has improved. They can remember what they have been taught at different points in the curriculum and begin to connect this learning together over time. Pupils value the feedback they receive from staff but find

that this can be inconsistent between subjects. This means they do not always understand how to improve their work or do better next time.

Since taking up post, leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND have worked tirelessly to address deficiencies in this provision. The way that the school now identifies, monitors and supports pupils with SEND is much improved. You are passionate about helping the most vulnerable pupils at the school receive a high-quality education. Staff are committed to supporting pupils with a wide range of needs. Recent professional development related to pupils with SEND was appreciated by staff. This has helped them to develop a greater knowledge about how to meet pupils' needs. You know that more remains to be done, including monitoring how effective support is for pupils with SEND across the school. It is too early to evaluate the impact this work will have on pupils' outcomes.

The trust continues to support the school by providing funding for additional leadership, teaching and support staff in the areas of greatest need. The external advice and guidance the school previously brokered have not begun. However, you have a clear set of objectives you wish to achieve when this support does commence. These are closely linked to your school improvement priorities. The CEO, while new to post, has a clear overview of the school's ongoing priorities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO or equivalent of the Blessed Peter Snow Catholic Multi-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