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Mrs J Bowen
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bowen

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic College, A Voluntary Catholic Academy

Following my visit with Alexandra Hook, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 January 2019, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2018.

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

leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures

the trust's statement of action is fit for purpose

the school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim advisory board, the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner

and the director of children's services for Stockton-on-Tees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018

- Urgently act to develop a culture of safeguarding in the school by:
 - improving pupils' behaviour, particularly when they are between lessons and during breaks and lunchtimes
 - ensuring that all pupils, and especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, attend school and sustain high rates of attendance.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make swift progress and outcomes improve by:
 - ensuring that all teachers provide pupils with work which builds on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding in order to deepen their thinking
 - ensuring that teachers make use of accurate assessment to plan engaging and challenging activities for pupils, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged pupils
 - making sure that teachers apply the school's assessment policy consistently to provide timely guidance for pupils so that they are aware of their next steps.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that all pupils make good progress by ensuring that:
 - leaders evaluate the impact of their actions effectively in order to accurately identify priorities for further improvement
 - improvement plans identify clear and precise actions, including measurable criteria for success, along with meaningful and manageable timelines
 - all teachers receive the appropriate professional development to develop their skills in the effective use of information about pupils' prior attainment so that they can plan learning to match pupils' different abilities
 - additional funding, such as pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up, and the funding to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is used effectively and that the impact of this funding on the outcomes of pupils is monitored rigorously by leaders and governors
 - governors hold school leaders to account through monitoring and checking processes which measure impact as well as actions.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 29 to 30 January 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. Inspectors also talked to groups of pupils in meetings, in lessons and around the school site. Inspectors also met members of the interim advisory board, including the chair and the vice chair. Inspectors talked to the chief executive officer of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust. In addition, inspectors met the consultant headteacher commissioned by the trust to support and monitor improvement. Inspectors scrutinised current behaviour and safeguarding information, attendance information and progress information. Inspectors also looked at documents that showed the work of the interim advisory board. Findings from the recent review of the school's use of the pupil premium were considered, along with other reviews of aspects of school performance.

Context

Since the May 2018 inspection, the previous headteacher has left the school and the governing body has been disbanded. Responsibilities for governance are now carried out by an interim advisory board. An acting headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in June 2018. On September 1, 2018, the school joined the newly-formed Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust. The school has experienced significant staffing changes, with 19 staff leaving the school and nine joining the school. A number of leadership roles have been changed to address the areas for improvement from the inspection report.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher are responding purposefully to the need to secure swift improvement. In many ways, they have found the changes required more significant than initially anticipated. Senior leaders are working closely alongside the consultant headteacher to develop leadership capacity. Leaders have put stronger systems in place to monitor the behaviour and progress of pupils and can better evaluate the effects of their actions. These systems are complementing the considerable time leaders spend visiting lessons and walking corridors and school yards to provide order and check standards.

The headteacher has worked with the consultant headteacher to realign the roles of the leadership team. Senior leaders now have a sharper awareness of their areas of responsibility and are in a better position to provide support and challenge for staff. Leaders have introduced stronger processes to check pupils' progress, which is now reviewed at regular intervals. Information on pupils' progress is now broken down more meaningfully to help subject leaders and teachers modify their teaching and provide additional interventions.

The consultant headteacher is providing professional development for the assistant headteacher with responsibility for pupil progress by modelling how to get the most from 'challenge meetings' with subject leaders. These checks on progress and standards are making leaders and teachers more accountable for progress. Leaders have a better understanding of pupils' prior attainment. They are using this understanding to set targets more reflective of the high attainment that many pupils arrive with. While these approaches are progressing at key stage 4, they are not as developed at key stage 3.

Leaders are using professional development to improve leadership and the quality of teaching. External trainers have worked with teachers to develop their lesson-planning skills and to encourage more challenge for pupils in lessons. Teachers have observed strong practice at local outstanding schools and are developing a more accurate understanding of standards in their subjects. While some initial gains are evident, this work remains at an early stage. School and trust leaders recognise the need to accelerate improvements in teaching and are in the process of making a senior appointment to address this.

Leaders are responding purposefully to the recent review of the use of pupil premium funding. An assistant headteacher is using priorities from that review to target provision and check the progress and welfare of pupils more closely. He has already talked to many pupils. As a result, he has gained insights into some of the barriers they may face and considers how support can be improved. The interim advisory board member with responsibility for pupil premium is using her expertise to provide effective scrutiny of the ongoing implementation of the pupil premium strategy.

Leaders have welcomed additional scrutiny. They have already commissioned reviews of behaviour, safeguarding and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In addition, subject reviews have taken place in areas such as mathematics. This work is providing leaders with additional evidence to measure the effects of their actions. Leaders are aware of improvement priorities and have plans that are broadly fit for purpose. However, the scale of improvement required is such that some of the milestones for improvement are not mapped out clearly enough.

After the inspection in May 2018, the chief executive officer of the trust invited parents to make personal appointments to discuss the inspection report. A number of parents did so. Since September, colleagues with responsibility for attendance and provision for pupils with SEND have built closer links with families. However, wider relationships with parents are less developed and more needs to be done to appraise them of, and involve them in, the school's improvement journey.

A new interim board was appointed in September. The board has extensive educational expertise at senior level. As such, the board has the necessary balance

of educational knowledge and community awareness to hold leaders to account. They have developed a recovery plan and meet every month at impact action meetings to measure the progress the school is making. They use the views of a consultant headteacher to provide external assurance.

The chief executive officer of the trust is providing much support. He has responded promptly to suggestions from school leaders to build capacity. He has already supported the appointment of an attendance officer and is in the process of enhancing the quality of alternative provision.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have worked with staff to secure improved standards of behaviour. This is leading to a more productive learning environment. Leaders are securing classroom environments that are more conducive to learning. Teachers have had opportunities to work with a teaching consultant and staff from outstanding schools to develop their expertise. More-thorough moderation processes are in place and this is helping staff to develop more-accurate assessment. They are working with school leaders to consider how assessment information can help them to modify their teaching. However, these initiatives are at an early stage of development and it is difficult to assess their effect.

Leaders have brought in new expectations for planning. They have raised the importance of pitching work more effectively to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and the most able. This work on lesson planning is contributing to better routines in lessons. However, this work is not yet sufficiently underpinned by a wider picture of the curriculum to show how individual lessons will fit into learning over time. Leaders are aware that the pace of change needs to intensify and are in the process of appointing leaders to intensify and monitor developments in teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have made improvements to pupils' behaviour and welfare their key priority. The new deputy headteacher has worked with staff to establish a visible presence on corridors and in social areas. This is contributing to more punctual and orderly movement between lessons and at break and lunchtimes. This presence has also influenced a reduction in the number of pupils injured at break and lunchtimes, although this remains too high.

Leaders have raised expectations of behaviour. There was an increase in fixed-term exclusions in September, but these have started to reduce as new expectations are reinforced. Referrals to the school's behaviour support unit have reduced. Staff have received training in de-escalation techniques to resolve behaviour incidents more effectively. On inspection, the atmosphere in the vast majority of lessons was orderly and pupils were compliant and willing to learn. There are still occasions

when low-level disruption can occur, but the picture is improving.

While all pupils talked to by inspectors felt safe, pupils' perceptions of behaviour are mixed. Some pupils believe that new routines and higher staff presence are creating a more orderly environment, but others felt that the behaviour was still more variable. This shows that while improvements are in progress, they are not yet consistently embedded.

Leaders have introduced much stronger systems to improve pupils' attendance. The school has commissioned the work of external specialists. Members of the team are available three days a week to make home visits and talk to pupils and families about attendance issues. Since September, this team have made an unprecedented number of home visits. These visits have enabled them to understand the factors that lie behind poor attendance. As a result of more effective attendance strategies, there is evidence that the attendance of pupils with SEND is improving. In addition, there has been marked improvements in attendance for the large majority of disadvantaged pupils who have been involved in intervention work. Overall figures remain too high, but systems and capacity are much stronger and are beginning to make a difference.

Support for vulnerable pupils is also improving. A separate learning and social space has been re-established for pupils with SEND. These pupils value the opportunities to learn and socialise there. Children looked after have regular meetings to check their welfare. In addition, the new pupil premium leader is establishing closer dialogue with disadvantaged pupils. There is evidence that safeguarding leaders follow-up concerns over pupils' welfare swiftly and record these thoroughly.

Outcomes for pupils

In summer 2018, pupils in Year 11 made better progress than pupils achieved in the previous year. The proportion who achieved grades 5 and above in English and mathematics was close to that seen nationally, with boys achieving higher on this measure than boys nationally. However, overall progress remains well below that seen nationally in the vast majority of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with SEND, continue to make much weaker progress.

Leaders have initially invested considerable resources into improving outcomes for the current Year 11. The curriculum has been modified to create additional time. Interventions are being targeted more specifically to meet pupils' needs. Leaders' actions to improve outcomes in other year groups are less developed. While there are some signs of improvement, these are small and from a very low starting point. It is too early to judge whether current outcomes are improving as a result of the changes to behaviour and teaching.

External support

The trust has commissioned a range of support to provide additional capacity. The consultant headteacher is developing leadership and keeping a watchful eye on the improvement journey. He provides regular updates on progress to the interim advisory board and to the chief executive officer of the trust. The trust has responded positively to requests for additional capacity. They have already supported additional appointments for attendance and new teaching and learning appointments are imminent. This support has strengthened leadership and behaviour systems but has had less impact on the quality of teaching at this stage.