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Mrs Anne Marie Hainsworth
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Dear Mrs Hainsworth

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Monica's RC High School

Following my visit with Nell Banfield, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 30–31 October 2018, 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 January 2018.

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

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) before the next monitoring inspection. I recommend that any such NQTs are supported with high-quality professional development provided by a local leader of education (LLE) currently working with the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place January 2018.

- Take immediate action to improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders provide governors with accurate information about the quality of education that the school provides
 - ensuring that governors challenge leaders and hold them firmly to account so that the school improves quickly
 - ensuring that leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and grounded in secure evidence
 - developing the newly formed leadership team so that leaders have the required skills and competencies to move the school forward
 - overhauling the leadership and management of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - developing middle leaders so that they are effective in their role, including in mathematics
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have a secure grasp of how well pupils are progressing across the school through appropriate assessment and target-setting systems
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment leads to sustainable improvements for pupils
 - using additional funding, for example pupil premium funding and SEN and/or disabilities funding, to support the pupils for whom it is intended.
- Rapidly improve the progress that boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make right across the school.
- Take immediate action to improve the progress that pupils make in mathematics.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan effectively for learning and progress, taking account of pupils' different starting points
 - planning lessons that meet the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
 - developing teachers' use of assessment to improve pupils' progress
 - ensuring that teachers address pupils' misconceptions in their learning as they arise
 - using teachers' subject knowledge to inspire and motivate pupils to make

good progress across all subjects and key stages.

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - eradicating low-level disruption in lessons, especially that caused by some boys
 - reducing further the proportion of pupils who are temporarily excluded from school and from lessons
 - ensuring that some boys' behaviour at social times is consistently good and that they self-regulate their behaviour.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 30 October 2018 to 31 October 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of staff, senior leaders, members of the interim executive board (IEB), a local leader of education (LLE) and representatives from the local authority. We also spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Salford and talked with pupils, both formally and informally, around the school.

Inspectors met with a group of parents and considered the views of 217 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered one email that was sent to Ofsted during the inspection. Inspectors carried out learning walks and lesson observations, some jointly with leaders, and observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times. During the inspection, inspectors looked at pupils' work and examined documents relating to safeguarding.

Context

Since the last inspection, the local authority and Diocese of Salford have established an IEB to work with leaders with the aim of bringing about rapid improvements in all areas. The leadership team has been restructured and new roles and responsibilities have been assigned to existing leaders. No teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. However, a number of teachers have since tendered their resignations. As part of a restructure of the special educational needs department, a new member of staff was appointed in September 2018 to support the leadership of this area.

The school has been the subject of a directive academy order from the regional schools commissioner. So far there has been little progress made towards academy status. School leaders and the interim executive board are still unaware of any imminent plans to move this situation forward.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

St Monica's is led by a committed team that is passionate about improving the school for the benefit of pupils. Leaders recognise that there is much work to do to ensure that pupils receive a good standard of education. However, despite their commitment, leaders and governors got off to too slow a start in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the most recent inspection. They did not take the immediate action required to improve the quality of education for pupils.

Leaders and governors took too long to act after the findings of the previous inspection. This prevented them from addressing promptly the key issues facing the

school. The provision of much-needed leadership support was not brokered until some months had passed. Consequently, governors were not effective and efficient in challenging leaders to improve the school. As a result, an IEB was formed four months after the inspection. All these delays have contributed to the progress towards the removal of special measures being too slow and variable.

The current headteacher and leadership team have worked hard to try to win the support of parents, staff, pupils and the local community. As a result of their efforts, the school is now in a better position to move forward. Weaknesses in leadership at all levels remain, including middle leadership. As a result, leaders are not inspiring the full confidence of staff, the local authority and other stakeholders.

More recently, leaders have put a range of actions into place, following clear and accurate advice from the external support provided for them by the LLE, specialist leaders of education (SLEs) and external consultants. These are beginning to show some early signs of improvement, for example in a common approach to assessment and improved outcomes for Year 11 pupils. Inspectors spoke with a group of parents and read the many responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Parents now speak positively about the school. Parent meetings about the progress of pupils and new assessment systems were favourably received by parents. This has gone a long way to improving relationships between home and school.

Prior to external support being provided, some leaders recognised the need for urgent action to be taken to improve the outcomes for Year 11 pupils. A range of strategies were put into place and pupils who left the school in summer 2018 made progress more in line with that expected by school staff. This demonstrates that improvements are possible if the need is quickly identified and acted upon with determination.

The quality of senior and middle leadership is still variable. Weaknesses persist. Leaders have not yet changed how they use extra funding to make the most of strategies to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. The ability of some leaders to analyse information about effectiveness accurately is mixed. As a consequence, some areas of self-evaluation are still not grounded in secure evidence. Some emerging signs are positive. For example, it is evident in the work of some pupils that some learning is more accurately pitched to meet the needs of learners. However, this is still variable across the school. Prior information is not used consistently well to shape future learning, particularly in mathematics.

Leaders now have a clearer strategy to address the areas identified in the previous inspection. However, the school improvement plan is not fit for purpose. The document does not focus sufficiently on what impact leaders' actions will have on pupils' learning and progress. The plan is unwieldy and lacks measurable success criteria in some key areas. As a result, the plan does not provide the clarity needed

to allow the interim executive board to firmly hold leaders, at all levels, to account. The plan does not help leaders to show clear and demonstrable evidence of their efforts to improve the school so far.

The IEB is resolute in its commitment to making sure that the quality of education improves more rapidly for pupils. They, along with the local authority and diocese, have been instrumental in ensuring that substantial support has been provided to improve leadership at all levels in the school. As a result, many improvement strategies are now in place, although many of these are still in their infancy.

As a direct consequence of the high-quality support provided by external consultants and the LLE, leaders are growing in confidence and have a more accurate view of the effectiveness of the school. School leaders also have an increasing awareness of their own effectiveness and realise that although many actions have been put into place this new school year, it is too early to see definitive evidence of the impact these are having on improving the quality of education for pupils. There is no doubt that leaders at all levels are working hard and can cite a range of strategies being implemented. However, leaders cannot demonstrate the impact of these initiatives on pupils' learning. For example, the new assessment system and the 'back to basics' approach to improve teaching and learning are not yet embedded and in operation fully.

Since the IEB was formed, it has begun to challenge leaders more effectively and it has an accurate understanding of the aspects of the school that require significant improvement. As a result of the governing body being disbanded, and the appointment of the IEB, an external review of governance was not required.

Crucial steps are now being taken to bring about change, such as improvements to managing the performance of staff and making clear that accountability at all levels is aligned and refocused on school improvement. Changes to assessment are now in place and work has been done to improve the behaviour and attitudes to learning of boys.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Since the start of this academic year, school leaders and external SLEs have worked with staff to clarify what effective teaching looks like through a 'back to basics' approach and a programme of professional development. There is a renewed focus on ensuring high-quality teaching and learning across all subjects and year groups. As a result of this new focus, all teachers now implement five non-negotiables to ensure prompt starts to lessons, appropriate learning activities and timely reviews of how pupils are progressing.

Leaders have implemented more rigorous systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching is improving in some areas as a result. Leaders have made expectations clear to staff and provided training to reinforce that

effective teaching in the classroom is now the highest priority for all. On the inspection, inspectors saw evidence of improvements to the quality of teaching and the quality of support provided externally; it is for these reasons that the school may now appoint NQTs.

There is evidence of stronger teaching across different subjects, for example in English and history, but weaknesses persist within and across some departments. Learning is stronger when questioning challenges pupils' thinking and when teaching is well matched to meet the needs of pupils. This is not yet seen consistently as some teachers do not build effectively on prior learning or accurately use pupils' prior knowledge to inform their planning. When this is the case, pupils become disengaged from their learning and low-level disruptions to learning occur. Some pupils are not moved on quickly enough when they have demonstrated that they understand and have mastered a concept. Consequently, some teaching does not promote and encourage the learning of different groups of pupils, such as girls in mathematics. Weaknesses in mathematics remain.

Evidence seen during the inspection demonstrated that some teachers are taking pupils' starting points into account when planning for learning. However, this was not consistent, including for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high but when expectations of staff are lower, pupils fail to show pride in their work or demonstrate an interest in their learning.

There are plans in place to continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. These are appropriate and provide support for teachers to enable them to share the effective practice that is evident in the school. However, these initiatives are still in their infancy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

There are some improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons. Prompt starts to lessons and tasks available for pupils to complete on entry to the classroom focus pupils on learning and improve their attitudes to work. Pupils say that they learn best when explanations are clear, relationships with staff are positive and the behaviour system is used consistently. However, pupils say that some of their learning is still interrupted by poor behaviour and that teachers are inconsistent in their management of this.

Exclusion rates are no longer rising and strategies are in place to manage internal exclusions more effectively. Leaders effectively manage the school's 'reflection' and 'trust' rooms and pupils respond well to this intervention. The proportion of boys receiving internal, external and permanent exclusions remains high. Leaders mentor groups of boys and short-term successes can be seen as a result of this. The impact of this strategy in the longer term is not yet known. Overall exclusion rates remain high, with fixed-term exclusions and permanent exclusions for the previous

academic year still being well above the national averages. Although the time spent by pupils in internal exclusion has fallen, the number of incidents resulting in exclusion has risen.

The attendance of pupils fell in the previous academic year, which leaders attribute to the increase in pupils taking holidays in term time. Although most pupils attend school regularly, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are still much more likely to be regularly absent from school than their peers or others nationally.

Pupils' behaviour around the school still requires improvement. There remain groups of pupils who do not self-regulate their behaviour. This leads to boisterous behaviour during social times and lesson changeovers, particularly from boys. Changes have been made to the school day to allow time for pupils to reach lessons on time, but some pupils are still late and require adult intervention to ensure that they arrive to lessons more promptly.

Safeguarding checks show that safeguarding records, documentation and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular training, and those responsible for safeguarding and recruitment have appropriate and recent qualifications.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and many parents agree. Pupils say that they know how to stay safe, but older pupils expressed concern that they do not have planned opportunities to learn about aspects of safeguarding and personal safety.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's analysis of provisional results for 2018 suggests improvements in attainment and progress for most pupils and groups of pupils. The provisional outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 4 in 2018 show a greater proportion of pupils now achieving a strong pass in mathematics and English.

Provisional information shows that progress improved for most subjects and overall across the school so that it is now almost in line with the national average. Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in 2017, as are pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, boys and higher-ability pupils are not making as rapid progress as others in the school or nationally. Progress is still weak in mathematics for all pupils, despite some improvements in 2018.

While improvements can be celebrated, leaders know that some pupils still leave St Monica's without realising their full potential.

The school's information for attainment and progress of current learners shows that at the end of the summer term, a significant proportion of pupils were not on track to reach their end-of-year targets. However, as a new system for following pupils'

progress is now in place, this information is not reliable and cannot be compared to the new system. The progress of current disadvantaged pupils shows that as pupils progress through the school, the differences between their progress and that of their peers within school continue to diminish. Individual meetings with senior leaders, parents and Year 11 pupils inform pupils exactly how they are performing and what they need to do to reach their potential.

Leaders recognise that previous outcomes were below average and that procedures to monitor progress did not identify the scale of underachievement quickly enough. As a result, action has been taken to rethink the school's approach to assessment and analysis of data. New systems are embedding and will be analysed for impact after the first assessment period, which is currently under way.

The leadership of assessment provides clear direction for middle leaders. Much more rigour has been introduced to ensure that teacher assessments are more accurate and reliable.

External support

The quality of support provided by the local authority and the Diocese of Salford has been essential to driving improvements in the school. The local authority and diocese have created an interim executive board which now provides strong support and challenge to leaders.

Considerable support has been provided through a locally based LLE and SLEs who work regularly with the school, primarily to provide leadership support and training at all levels.

Currently, the local authority, diocese, IEB and school leaders are exploring a possible response to the directive academy order. However, progress in this area has not been rapid enough.

Leaders and members of the IEB should ensure that they:

- improve leadership at all levels to bring about the rapid improvements necessary
- make sure that leaders' measures of success in the school improvement plan are focused on the impact of the actions on improving the quality of education for pupils.