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Mr Alex Hren  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Hren

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saint Paul's Catholic High School**

Following my visit to your school on 29 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and directors of the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- the plans for the development and implementation of the new curriculum are effectively carried out
- the current curriculum is effectively implemented so that Year 11 pupils' achievement in their GCSE examinations improves markedly.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I had discussions with you and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust (WCAT). I also had a discussion with a member and a trustee of WCAT. Such trustees are known as directors in this trust. The member who I met is also the director of education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury. I met the chair and two other members of the local governing body. I spoke with other senior leaders and middle leaders. These leaders included the subject leaders of English, mathematics, science, geography, history and modern foreign languages. I met with groups of pupils in key stages 3 and 4 and observed pupils' behaviour during breaktime and lunchtime.

I spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.

I evaluated the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plan, other planning documents and a recent record of external scrutiny of the school. I reviewed minutes of meetings of WCAT. I considered the findings of a recent survey of staff views organised by WCAT. I visited a sample of lessons accompanied by a senior leader and looked at the work in a small sample of pupils' books.

I held a short discussion with leaders about the culture of safeguarding in the school.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, you have completed a staffing review in the school. You were supported in this by governors and directors. This led to fewer staff being employed. The number of senior leaders has reduced. The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been redefined.

The scheme of delegation has been re-written. This document sets out the relationship between WCAT, the local governing body and the school.

Leaders changed the timetable of the school day to include five lessons, each lasting one hour every day. At the same time, leaders introduced separate lunchtimes for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

More pupils have joined the school than have left at times other than the start of the school year.

## **Main findings**

The previous inspection report asked school leaders to improve the progress of pupils by addressing gaps in older pupils' knowledge and skills. As well as this, the inspectors found that, even though it had improved, pupils' behaviour was not yet good enough. The school has ensured that pupils' behaviour has improved. For

example, the younger pupils I spoke with are not worried by the behaviour of older pupils. During this inspection, I saw pupils behaving well. While there have been improvements to the way the curriculum is provided, these did not lead to any significant increase in Year 11 pupils' GCSE results in 2019. These results were not good enough.

Leaders have provided training to improve teachers' confidence and skills. This has supported leaders' introduction of clear expectations about how teachers can make learning effective. Subject leaders have been given more time each week to work with their departmental teams to ensure that teaching improves. This is part of a new approach in which subject leaders have more responsibility for pupils' success in each subject. Teachers are helping pupils to become increasingly successful in knowing more and remembering more in the subjects they learn. For example, in English, I saw a strong focus on building up pupils' vocabulary. However, the lessons I visited and exercise books I looked at show that some departments have more to do to ensure that pupils can do as well as possible. Leaders ensure that teachers pay attention to ways to encourage boys in their learning. For example, in mathematics, a boys-only teaching group has been set up in Year 11. In English, teachers have chosen more books and other texts that include interesting male characters.

Pupils and staff spoke to me very positively about the changes to the school day. Middle leaders said that the shorter lesson times allow pupils to keep their concentration longer throughout each lesson. Pupils feel that lunchtimes are much calmer and more pleasant. Staff who work in the canteen agree with this pupil view. I saw pupils behaving well and getting along together at breaktime and lunchtime. Pupils also behaved well in the lessons I visited. In some lower sets, a few pupils were less enthusiastic about their learning and so were less attentive to their teachers.

Senior leaders have been systematic in their approach to improving the school. They have prepared a suitably detailed overall plan for this improvement. This includes each of the weaker aspects found at the previous inspection. In addition, they have carefully analysed the school's current effectiveness. The school's record of this presents an accurate picture. Most of the aspects that leaders found needing improvement through this analysis are included in the school's overall plan. However, one or two aspects do not match up as well as possible between both documents. This creates a risk that checks on improvements could be missed. Leaders have reviewed the school's improvement against the plan. However, their records of this do not identify as clearly as possible what further steps may be needed to ensure that improvement continues as quickly as planned.

Senior leaders' plans have a sharp focus on supporting improvement in subjects that are not performing as well as others. This is particularly the case in subjects where leaders' analysis shows that Year 11 pupils did very poorly in their GCSEs in 2019. Middle leaders recognise that expectations on them have been raised. They

confirmed that the school has ensured that these higher expectations have not unacceptably increased their workload.

The new arrangements clarifying the responsibilities of the trust, the local governing body and school leaders have strengthened governance. All those involved have a better understanding of which group is responsible for what. This has enabled governors and directors to provide stronger challenge and more helpful support to the school. WCAT has reorganised its financial arrangements so that it is easier for the trust to fund development and improvement activities. This has the potential to benefit St Paul's, as well as other schools in the trust. Plans are in place for a senior leader from another school in the trust to provide more time for strategic leadership of pastoral care at St Paul's. This is in response to the particular needs of some pupils.

### **External support**

The school continues to receive support from a local, effective Catholic secondary school. This has included training and other development activities about leadership, and the curriculum, and in checking that science assessment is accurate. In addition, the local authority has provided support to improve the effectiveness of the science department.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of WCAT, the director of education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**