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Mrs Fiona Minshall  
Firbank Road  
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Wythenshawe  
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Dear Mrs Minshall

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Paul's Catholic High School**

Following my visit to your academy on 23 September 2015 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 which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2015. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

### **The academy is taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weakness designation.**

This letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, so it is at least good, in order that students make good or better progress across the academy in all subjects, especially in mathematics, science, the humanities subjects and languages, by ensuring all teachers:
  - use assessment information to plan their teaching to ensure that all students' learning needs are well met
  - raising teachers' expectations and level of questioning so that all students, particularly the most able, explore their learning in greater depth
  - mark work consistently well across and within all subjects so that students have clear advice about how to improve their work and opportunities to respond to the guidance that teachers give them
  - consistently apply the academy's behaviour policy
  - apply whole-academy approaches consistently to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills across subjects
  - share the good practice that exists among teaching assistants and some teachers so that high-quality support is provided for disabled students and those who have special educational needs in all lessons.
  
- Strengthen further the impact of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by ensuring:
  - the targeting and monitoring of the use of the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged students is sufficiently rigorous and impacts positively on students' progress
  - the further development of the consistency in quality of subject leadership, so all these leaders can be equally as effective in improving teaching and in holding teachers to account for students' progress
  - students receive consistently good teaching by giving further priority to the training of less experienced and less effective teachers
  - that recent changes to the curriculum are monitored and evaluated in terms of the impact they have on raising students' achievement and enjoyment levels
  - the school works even more closely with primary schools to make sure pupils' literacy skills development is a priority as they progress from Year 6 to Year 7 and that accurate information is available in respect of their skills when they enter into Year 7 of the academy.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 23 September 2015**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and a group of heads of department. I held a discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors, the Vice Chair of the Wythenshawe Catholic Multi Academy Trust, a representative of the diocese of Shrewsbury and a representative of the local authority. A meeting was also held with 12 new members of staff including newly qualified teachers (NQTs). I conducted a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Strategic Monitoring Group. I also held discussions with a group of students and spoke with many students during the breaks and at lunchtime. A learning walk was conducted with a senior leader to observe learning and student behaviour. The academy improvement and action plans and academy information on student attainment and progress were scrutinised.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, an assistant headteacher has left to take up a headship in another school. Sixteen new teaching staff have been appointed to the academy including NQTs.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the academy**

Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly focused on and very committed to improvement. They have relentlessly promoted and pursued a culture of high expectations, aspirations and improved achievement for students since the last inspection. However, senior leaders need to ensure that all staff are included in, and contribute to, the academy's programme to improve and raise expectations. Staff appointed for September 2015 have added strength, energy and experience to the academy.

Systems to improve data collection and to analyse the quality and effectiveness of provision have been sharpened. The tracking, monitoring and evaluation of students' progress are more systematic. Interventions to improve individual students' progress are in place. However, these systems are relatively new and will require careful ongoing monitoring to judge their effectiveness and impact over time.

Senior leaders are clearer about their responsibilities and work hard to achieve them. Middle managers are highly committed but further work is required to develop their skills to enhance the management and leadership of their areas of responsibility.

During the the learning walk it became apparent that there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere within classrooms. The introduction of professional development time each Monday afternoon has been welcomed by staff. Opportunities for the sharing of good practice have been strengthened. NQTs confirmed that they are receiving good

support from middle and senior leaders, which has enabled them to settle quickly into the routine, practice and management of teaching and academy life.

Learning and behaviour walks through the academy, as well as discussions with students and teachers, offered evidence of improved student behaviour. Students spoken to confirmed that disruption to lessons had decreased significantly. They also welcomed the introduction of a new behavioural code, which they said had given them a clearer understanding of inappropriate behaviour and its consequences and gave them opportunities to reflect upon the nature of positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. Attendance has improved. Students spoken to said they felt safe in the academy.

In 2015, the percentage of students attaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics improved to just above government floor standards. There were also significant improvements in geography, music, additional science and BTEC science. While attainment in mathematics improved, it remains too low. Senior leaders recognise the urgency for more rapid improvement in attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4. Academy records indicate that current Year 11 and Year 10 students are making better progress. New ways of assessing students' progress have been introduced at the start of the current academic year. These systems are still to be embedded and evaluated for accuracy and impact. Academy data indicate that students in Year 8 and Year 9 are making better progress. Significant changes have been made to the curriculum at Key Stage 3, including streaming in some subjects and a reduction in some class sizes. Greater emphasis has been placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. These changes are new and it remains too early to judge their impact.

The academy has improved links with feeder primary schools. Staff visit primary schools more frequently to better understand pupils' learning and to improve the management of transition and the Year 7 curriculum. It is too early in the term to evaluate the impact of substantive changes to the Year 7 curriculum.

Governors are highly focused on the academy's improvement and robustly monitor performance. They hold senior leaders to account but are also highly supportive of their work to change the academy culture and raise staff and students' aspirations and expectations alike. Governors interviewed commented on the improvement in the quality of performance data presented by senior leaders. They are also acutely aware of the need for rapid and sustained improvement in students' attainment and achievement.

There remains much to do. Senior leaders acknowledge a lack of consistency in good and better practice across and within subjects. Some staff and students need to more fully embrace a culture of high aspiration and ambition. Data, assessment, intervention and monitoring systems need to be more deeply embedded so that sustainability is strengthened. However, the academy is moving in the right direction.

### **Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Strong focus and purposeful approach of headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders to improvement across provision.
- New data, assessment and monitoring systems are better focused on improving provision and are starting to be embedded in academy practice and culture.
- Strong external scrutiny on the quality of academy provision and outcomes.

### **Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Improvement in the achievement and attainment of students by the end of Key Stage 4 is too slow. The gap between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students is too large when compared with their peers in school and nationally. Boys underachieved in a wide range of subjects at Key Stage 4. Girls underachieved in mathematics at Key Stage 4.

### **External support**

Strong links and support continue to be offered by the Wythenshawe Catholic Multi Academy Trust. The academy has maintained good links with the local authority including support in professional development for staff and as a broker in establishing a strategic monitoring group. The strategic monitoring group, comprising external headteachers and former headteachers, plays a robust role in evaluating academy performance across provision. Academy leaders and governors greatly value the work and support of the strategic monitoring group.