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Dear Mr Nightingale

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 6 and 7 February 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures 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 and carers, any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, Kelly Leonard and Scott Maclean, Ofsted Inspectors, and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, trustees, governors and a representative of the local authority, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent monitoring visit. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also visited lessons, met with other staff and pupils, and sampled pupils' work and the school's documentation. We focused on checking leaders' work to improve the quality of education, attendance and provision for pupils' wider development. We also considered aspects of leaders' ongoing work to enhance the culture of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. 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 requiring special measures.

I am of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has made several judicious appointments. A new subject leader has been appointed in English. Added to this, the school has strengthened the pastoral team and added capacity to the attendance team.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school, in partnership with the trust and the local governing body, has worked swiftly and determinedly to make considerable improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders at all levels are taking the right actions, in the right order and at the right pace. The impact on pupils' experiences at school is noticeable. There are firm foundations in place for the next stage of the journey. The school has an accurate and extremely detailed understanding of what is working well and the areas for further improvement, such as pupils' punctuality to school. The improvement plan is comprehensive. It contains appropriate actions for development.

Substantial work has been carried out to improve the quality of education since the last monitoring visit. This has ensured that there are now well designed and clear curriculums in place for each subject. The school has clearly identified the most important knowledge that pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), should learn in each subject and the order in which this content should be taught. This has increased staff's confidence and expertise in ensuring that pupils' knowledge is built over time.

The school is now focused on improving the way in which the curriculum is taught. Staff have received training to build and refresh their teaching skills. Pupils are more able to recall their learning. This is because there are greater opportunities for them to revisit what they have been taught previously. Teachers' questioning is becoming more effective. As a result, pupils are able to answer targeted questions which assess their prior knowledge. Even so, teachers' checks on pupils' learning are not effective enough. This means that misconceptions are missed or go unaddressed. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge.

There have been some improvements to the support that pupils receive with reading. Pupils' reading knowledge is now routinely assessed and there are suitable strategies in place for some of those pupils who find reading difficult. However, there remain many pupils who do not receive the support that they need to overcome gaps in their reading knowledge. The school is aware of this situation and has appropriate plans in place to remedy this weakness.

The school's work to improve attendance is bearing fruit. Effective systems to track and monitor attendance mean that the school is aware of trends and patterns and can use this

information to provide targeted support to pupils and families where needed. Pupils' attendance is a high priority for everyone. As a result of effective teamwork, pupils' attendance is now above the national average.

The school has carefully considered what it wants pupils to learn in the personal, social and health education curriculum. This means that pupils now study a much broader range of themes in a systematic manner. Pupils can readily recall what they have learned about online safety and healthy relationships. They are becoming better prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils' behaviour has transformed since the last monitoring visit. The school is a far more settled place to be. The new behaviour policy has ensured that expectations for pupils' behaviour are more clearly understood by teachers and pupils. However, there are some classrooms where the policy is not followed as well as it should be. This means that learning is sometimes disrupted. The proportion of pupils who miss lessons or arrive late has reduced considerably. This is because the school has a much greater insight into behaviour trends and patterns of for different groups of pupils. The school is far more able to pinpoint those pupils who need further support. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour around school has improved. Social times are calm and respectful.

The culture of safeguarding continues to strengthen. Safeguarding records show that the school acts swiftly to help pupils who are known to be at risk of harm. This includes making sure that these pupils can access external support where appropriate. Safeguarding is effective.

The school's engagement with stakeholders has improved. Staff work closely with parents and carers to ensure that they understand the raised expectations around homework, behaviour and attendance. Parents have a much more positive view about the education and support that their children are receiving than they did in the past. Staff told inspectors that they feel valued and well supported. Despite the changes at the school, they appreciate the care that the school takes to consider their well-being and workload. Pupils also appreciate the changes that have taken place. They are increasingly proud to wear the badge of St Matthews on their blazer.

Trustees and members of the local governing body maintain a close oversight of the school's progress. The support and challenge that they offer is contributing well to the increased capacity to bring about improvement.

The school continues to use the support available through the trust to help drive improvement. For example, they have utilised this support to develop curriculum expertise and to raise levels of attendance.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the CEO of the Emmaus Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Sharples
His Majesty's Inspector