

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 July 2024

Emma Keenan
Headteacher
St Monica's RC High School, a Voluntary Academy
Bury Old Road
Prestwich
Manchester
Greater Manchester
M25 1JH

Dear Mrs Keenan

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of St Monica's RC High School, a Voluntary Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 2 July 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 took place because the school received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspection.

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, parents and carers any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust and another trustee, members of the local governing body and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, met with pupils and staff and reviewed a range of documentation. 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 become good.

The school should take further action to:

- refine and strengthen the support that is in place for pupils in key stage 4 who have gaps in their reading knowledge
- improve further pupils' rates of attendance, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the local governing body. For example, a new chair of the local governing body has been appointed. In addition, the school has appointed a new deputy headteacher and a new special educational needs coordinator.

The findings from the previous inspection have been accepted by the trust, the school, staff and those responsible for governance. This has helped the school to move forward quickly. Staff and leaders at all levels are united in their desire to bring about positive change. As a result, the school has taken the right action, in the correct order and at suitable pace to tackle the shortcomings in pupils' educational experience. The foundations for further improvement are securely in place.

The school has taken effective action to build and strengthen meaningful engagement with staff and pupils. This has led to staff and pupils having greater confidence that the school will listen to their views and act on their concerns. Staff feel well supported. Despite a time of change, their workload and well-being have been duly considered. Trustees and members of the local governing body have further improved their oversight of the school. They are offering suitable challenge to the school about the impact of its work on pupils. This support is helping the school to bring about sustained improvement.

The school has taken decisive action to evaluate the effectiveness of its systems to check how well pupils are learning the curriculum. It has provided staff with research-based training about how to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly and with accuracy. As a result, teachers are confident and better equipped to pinpoint the gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers are also increasingly skilled at spotting when pupils need to revisit previously taught concepts. This is enabling pupils to build a more secure body of knowledge over time.

Reading continues to have a high priority. Across subjects, the school has identified the specific terminology that it wants pupils to learn and understand. This is helping pupils to develop their range of subject-specific vocabulary. The school has implemented a range of strategies to identify and support pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. This support is having a positive impact on pupils in key stage 3. They typically catch up. However, this support is not extended effectively enough to include those pupils in key stage 4 who find reading difficult. This means that some pupils do not receive the timely support that they need to read well.

The school has revised its behaviour policy and focused on ensuring that pupils experience a calm and orderly environment during the school day. As part of this work, the school has liaised closely with parents, staff and pupils to gain their views on how to promote positive conduct. There is now greater clarity among staff about the expectations for pupils' behaviour. In addition, those pupils who need further help to manage their behaviour are receiving targeted support. Increasingly, staff are more confident and consistent in applying the updated guidance. The school regularly reflects on adjustments made to its behaviour policy. It has set out clear next steps to ensure that improvements to the behaviour and culture in the school are sustained. All of this action is proving to be successful.

Lunchtimes have been reorganised so that pupils in each key stage have the opportunity to eat and socialise with their peers. These social times are well supervised. A consistent response to dealing with incidents of bullying, derogatory language or discriminatory behaviour has been established. Staff have been trained so that they have the tools to challenge inconsiderate behaviour and help pupils understand the impact of their actions.

There has been a considerable reduction in the number of pupils who are suspended from school. The behaviour systems are monitored carefully. The school makes appropriate use of the information that it collects about behaviour incidents to target support where it is needed.

The school, together with the trust, has sought advice and guidance from external partners to review and refine its systems and procedures to promote pupils' attendance. Staff have specific roles. This means that there is a greater focus on pupils' attendance. The school works with families to better understand the reasons why pupils do not come to school. As a result, most pupils attend regularly. However, some pupils, such as those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, continue to have higher absence rates than their peers.

The school is embracing the external support on offer. This includes the support from the Department for Education's behaviour hub programme. This is helping the school to assess the impact of the work it has already carried out and identify additional areas for refinement. Staff have welcomed this support. They value the opportunities for professional development with hub partners.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of St Teresa of Calcutta 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 Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Bowker
His Majesty's Inspector