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Kevin Maddocks
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Dear Mr Maddocks

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of St Mary's Catholic College, A Voluntary Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 25 June 2025, 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 meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents 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, the chair of the trust and a representative of 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 some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Main findings

The quality of education at the school is improving. The school has developed the subject and pedagogical expertise of staff. This is helping them choose the best teaching approach for the specific topics that are being taught. This is starting to have an impact and is working well in some areas of the school. However, this is not consistent across subjects and years groups. Currently, the school's published data for those Year 11 pupils who took examinations in 2024 does not reflect the improvements that have been made to the delivery of the curriculum.

Teachers are now better equipped to check how well pupils know and understand the curriculum. For instance, teachers are providing pupils with frequent opportunities to recall what they have been taught previously more often than before. In addition, whole-school assessment approaches have sharpened teachers' focus on checking what pupils have learned over time. When teachers confidently use these methods, pupils engage in purposeful reflection activities that help to further secure their learning. Increasingly, teachers adapt future learning in response to what pupils know and can do. However, in some subjects, teachers still move on too quickly before being assured pupils' essential knowledge is secure. This is because some teachers do not use their checks on where pupils may still have gaps in their knowledge to reshape future learning activities.

The school has strengthened its systems for checking curriculum delivery. The rigour of how individual subjects are held to account has increased in terms of regularity and clarity. Information is used to identify where successes are achieved and where more attention is needed. This is helping the school be focused in where it needs to direct its attention.

The school has made reading a high priority. The processes for identifying those pupils at the earliest stages of reading are clearly defined. Those who need the most help get support that is specific to the aspects of reading that they have not mastered. Their progress is monitored closely. Pupils increasingly read widely and for pleasure. In daily 'big read' sessions, pupils benefit from regular reading and exposure to a broad range of authors and texts.

The school, supported by the trust, has acted with appropriate rigour and timeliness to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The trust and external consultants make regular checks on the school's progress against the milestones outlined in the purposeful improvement plan. The local governing body has improved its role in holding the school to account. The trust has brokered the right support at the right time, in order to bolster leadership capacity across the school. As a result, leaders feel better equipped and more empowered to fulfil their roles. Staff share the school's vision and understand how their contribution makes a difference to pupils' success.

The school is addressing pupils' absence in a comprehensive manner. It has started analysing absence trends with a high level of precision. This has helped the school to put in place new strategies to promote good attendance. The school knows and understands

the nuanced barriers to good attendance that individual pupils face. It is strengthening its engagement with families to encourage better attendance rates. There is some evidence that this work has started to have a positive impact for some groups of pupils. However, the rates of pupils' absence, including persistent and severe absence, from school remain high.

The trust has harnessed support from carefully nominated external partners to help address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. This work included an external review of the school's quality assurance procedures and support for leadership development. Additionally, the school has used the guidance from another multi-academy trust to strengthen its strategies to improve pupils' learning and attendance. Even so, the school is pursuing further external support to sharpen the oversight that it has over the quality of education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the CEO of the Holy Family Catholic Multi Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Wirral. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Bowker
His Majesty's Inspector