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Clare McKenna
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Dear Mrs McKenna

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Saint Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic Academy

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on Wednesday 16th July 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 and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, trust staff, governors, trustees and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. I also visited lessons, reviewed samples of work and documentation, spoke to staff and pupils, observed behaviour at social times and reviewed safeguarding records. 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

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced various changes to its senior leadership team. This has unsettled staff. To continue the momentum of improvement and to instil confidence in staff, the trust appointed an acting headteacher, who is still in position. The school has overhauled its special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) provision and appointed a range of specialist staff, as well as other staffing additions to the school. That said, the school has faced considerable difficulties in recruiting staff. As such, there have been eleven teaching vacancies which have mostly been filled by long-term supply teachers. This has caused frustration for staff and pupils. However, for the first time in many years, after a successful recruitment drive, the school will be fully staffed in September 2025, including two new interim deputy headteachers.

The lengthening of the acting headteacher's tenure has brought some much-needed stability to the leadership of the school. Staff, pupils, parents and carers had lost trust in the school. Under the acting headteacher, the school has now begun to build better relationships within the community. Although this work is in its infancy, there are convincing signs of improvement. For example, parents of pupils with SEND have attended coffee mornings to discuss the support in place for their child. The trustees have supported the school well to focus on turning around the culture of the school beginning with pupils' behaviour. This has been the school's priority and, as such, the school has secured the building blocks on which to build further improvement.

Historic weaknesses in leadership at all levels of the school are being addressed. The trust has provided support for middle leaders to enhance their understanding of the curriculum and their leadership responsibilities. In doing so, the school is making some headway in raising expectations of what pupils can and should achieve.

The school has a clear understanding of what actions need to happen to improve the quality of education. Even so, progress in this area has been slower than in other aspects of school improvement. In part, this was due to the high number of unfilled teaching vacancies. This barrier to change has been successfully addressed in readiness for the new academic year.

Currently, in some subjects, teachers do not design learning activities that match the ambition of the curriculum. They focus instead on tasks to engage pupils. Consequently, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to apply their knowledge. This means that pupils struggle to remember their learning. Furthermore, some pupils lack confidence and resilience. They give up too quickly for fear of making a mistake. Coupled with weak oracy skills, pupils struggle to articulate their understanding. Pupils are not typically learning or achieving well enough.

The school continues to prioritise reading to ensure that those who are identified with reading difficulties receive support to help them to read fluently and confidently. Expert staff deliver the phonics programme effectively. This helps pupils in the early stages of reading to master phonics quickly. The school makes effective use of assessment strategies to diagnose any gaps that pupils have in their reading knowledge. Tailored support is delivered well. Pupils confirm that this support has improved their reading

knowledge. The school's form time reading programme exposes pupils to a well-considered array of texts carefully linked to developing pupils' understanding of the world and life in modern Britain. However, there is some inconsistency in how well this programme is delivered and, as a result, some pupils do not engage with it as well as they could.

The school has invested heavily in improving its SEND provision. In the past, the school did not have suitable processes in place to identify pupils' additional needs. That has now changed. In recent months, pupils' SEND needs are accurately identified. Staff's awareness of different needs and how best to meet them is developing.

In the last month, the school has systematically and steadily introduced a new care, support, guidance and behaviour policy to address the poor behaviour of a minority of pupils. Initially, this led to a spike in the number of suspensions. Even so, the total number of suspensions this academic year, for all groups of pupils, has decreased. While this policy is not fully embedded, some improvement in pupils' behaviour is evident. There is a calmness that pervades the school. Pupils are aware of the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Fewer pupils contravene the school's rules. There is less disruption to learning in lessons. Typically, pupils learn undisturbed. They are beginning to appreciate that the school has their best interests at heart.

The school has introduced a range of strategies to tackle pupils' absence. It has worked alongside a range of partners to garner expertise in this area. The school has started to work with parents to help them to understand the importance of regular attendance. Nevertheless, absence rates remain high. Disadvantaged pupils, including some pupils with SEND, are still absent too often.

The trust's support for the school has picked up pace since the previous inspection. Additional members of trust staff, with particular areas of expertise, have worked very closely with the school. This increased capacity has focused on equipping and empowering school staff to bring about improvements in a sustainable way. For example, the strategic approach to improving behaviour is beginning to bear fruit and the additional trust personnel deployed to support in this area are no longer needed.

The trustees have a full understanding of the shortcomings in the school. They are determined to see long-term and sustainable improvements in the school for pupils' benefit. As such, there is a calculated and steady approach to addressing the identified areas of weakness. The trust and members of the local governing body are beginning to hold the school to better account for the deficiencies in the quality of education that pupils receive.

The trust has looked outside of its own area of expertise and has worked with other trusts and organisations to bolster improvements in the school. Through this support, the school has been able to implement the new behaviour policy effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of Pope Francis Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Knowsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Jones
His Majesty's Inspector