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19 January 2012

Mr McNiffe  
Principal  
The Academy of St Francis of Assisi  
Gardeners Drive  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
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Dear Mr McNiffe

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with additional focus on behaviour:  
monitoring inspection of The Academy of St Francis of Assisi**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your academy on 18 January 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on our thanks to your students, staff and to the Chair of the Governing Body.

Since the previous inspection there have been many changes, particularly in the senior leadership team. Two new vice-principals are in post, and many new staff have joined the mathematics and English departments. A new assistant vice-principal for students with special educational needs and those with disabilities has been appointed and a reconciliation centre opened to improve behaviour.

As a result of the inspection on 6-7 December 2010, the academy was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and the effectiveness of the academy in improving students' behaviour is satisfactory.

**Achievement of pupils at the school**

There is an upward trend in achievement since the previous inspection, most significantly in the 5A\* to C measure, which is now significantly above the national

average. There was a marginal improvement in English last year and the mathematics results declined very slightly. There is an equal focus on achievement at Key Stage 3 and rigorous tracking to ensure that students coming through the school make 2 levels of progress at Key Stage 3. The academy has used targeted interventions through lessons and withdrawal groups for those students who are on the borderline of grades C and D, including direct mentoring by members of the senior leadership team. Groups of students have already taken their examination in mathematics and gained a C grade. Results from early entry in English and mathematics examinations put the academy in a stronger position than it was at this time last year and staff are predicting that at least 40% of students will leave with 5A\* to C including English and mathematics. The academy is predicting that this will rise to 50% 5A\* to C in 2013. Tracking last year was accurate and the academy has shown a swift response to underachievement. Improvements have also been seen in the achievement of students with special educational needs and those with disabilities due to a focus upon providing more effective support in lessons.

### **The quality of teaching**

There remains some variability in the quality of teaching and two inadequate lessons were observed. However, the majority of lessons seen were good and characterised by high engagement, strong planning for individual needs and abilities, good support for students with special educational needs and those with disabilities and good behaviour. An adviser from the local authority has been bought in by the school for two days per week to support mathematics and an extra mathematics teacher has been employed. Along with new leadership in this department, this is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching in mathematics. Where teaching is weaker there is insufficient support or challenge for students of all abilities, a lack of independent learning and lack of pace and challenge.

A new marking policy has been introduced since the previous inspection and there are good examples of it being used to give students specific feedback on the level of their achievement and detail of how to improve their work. However, this remains inconsistent in areas across the school. Expectations have been raised, including for those students with special educational needs and those with disabilities and this has already shown some impact in results.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Inspectors found behaviour around the academy to be orderly and polite. Students opened doors for inspectors and stood up when adults came into the class. No inadequate behaviour was seen and behaviour in lessons observed was satisfactory or good. A varied sample of students spoken to at random by inspectors during breaks and lunchtimes reported that behaviour has improved and all students spoken to reported that they felt safe.

The reconciliation centre serves as an internal exclusion centre as the academy recognises the need to monitor the progress of students closely while they are excluded. The centre is well organised and a purposeful learning environment. The academy recognises the need for the same high-quality learning resources appropriate to students' abilities to be consistently provided here. Referrals to the centre are well monitored so the school is aware of any students with repeated referrals. However, these results are not yet analysed in sufficient detail to track back to the quality of teaching the student received when the incident occurred or to make connections with specific staff or subject areas. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced but remain above the national average. The academy has raised expectations of behaviour so referrals to the reconciliation centre are not always for issues that would have previously resulted in a fixed-term exclusion.

Attendance has improved due to the concerted efforts of the academy to reduce the high number of students who were persistently absent. Numbers of persistent absentees have nearly halved, and although figures remain above the national average, this is a good indication of the academy's capacity to make improvements where it focuses its efforts. However, targets and expectations for attendance could be raised further to help the academy move nearer to the national average.

The academy has made progress in providing for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as students report a more harmonious community and subjects such as music create good opportunities for students to practise cooperation and team work. The academy is a stimulating and purposeful learning environment with bright displays and clear examples of levelled work.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

There is an unswerving focus on improving the quality of teaching and the appointment of a new vice-principal for pedagogy serves to emphasise this. The leadership team has responded well to the recommendations from the previous inspection and made significant changes to staffing where necessary. Nonetheless, the academy still has a long way to go for standards to reach national averages in English and mathematics. The governing body has a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The academy's development plan focuses entirely upon the areas for improvement; senior leaders work highly effectively and all are abundantly aware of their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Secure monitoring and tracking systems are in place to monitor students' progress, but systems are less robust for monitoring teachers' marking and assessment and to tackle the variability in quality.

Improvements in attendance, a focus on improving rather than just correcting behaviour and well-focused improvement plans, give an indication of how the academy has built capacity in the last year.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your academy. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## Annex

- **Accelerate and secure the improving attainment and achievement across the academy, moving closer to reaching and then exceeding the national averages, particularly in English and mathematics by:**
  - ensuring that information on students' progress is used to plan lessons which meet the full range of abilities
  - setting higher learning expectations and aspirations for all students and particularly those with a statement of special educational needs
  - embedding consistent marking and assessment systems across all subjects so that students have a clear understanding of their next steps in learning.
  
- **Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:**
  - building on the improvements already begun but with an enhanced focus on learning rather than just teaching
  - sharing the best practice of teaching and learning more effectively across the academy
  - developing students as independent learners
  - using adult support in classrooms more effectively to promote better learning.
  
- **Improve attendance by:**
  - continuing with the programmes in place to engage families, particularly those whose children are regularly absent and with an emphasis on those new to the country.