

St Monica's R.C. High School

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January 17th 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

With the new term now well under way, it is timely that I write to share with you both our immediate priorities and our longer term developments as a school. As you are no doubt already aware, our recent Ofsted inspection confirmed that the Special Measures designation should be removed forthwith. We are delighted and proud that this prompted a letter of recognition from Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. The school was redesignated as Requires Improvement, which was reassuringly exactly where our self-evaluation had placed us at that time. Indeed, the inspection agreed that the next steps had been correctly identified and were already being addressed. Since the inspection our school development plan has been updated accordingly as we move into the next stage of school improvement, which as ever will have at heart the aim of ensuring the best possible educational outcomes for every pupil in our care. The pace of improvement will not slow, so there can be no compromise on standards.

With that in mind, Mrs Keenan has already written to you all and will begin meeting with the parents or carers of pupils who are finding it difficult to readjust to my exacting expectations. We will also increase our challenge around uniform, particularly regarding make-up, earrings and appropriate footwear. The inspection team recognised the overall effectiveness of the strategies put in place over the past twelve months, and I would ask for your continued support in this, as we firmly believe that it contributes significantly to positive attitudes to learning and discipline.

From the beginning of this term we have introduced a literacy strategy in Years 7 to 9, and a more comprehensive Physical, Social, Health and Citizenship programme across all years. This week I held assemblies with all pupils to explain the importance of these two initiatives. We will review the impact of this work at February half term and then amend and improve accordingly as necessary.

Looking further ahead to September 2020, we are proposing a slight amendment to the structure of the school day. This would mean that the length of the school day would be shortened by ten minutes, finishing at 2:50pm. I shared this proposal with the Executive Board in December and they support the rationale for this suggestion, having understood the benefits it will undoubtedly bring. There would be no loss of learning time with all lessons still an hour long. The reduction would be at lunch time and at morning registration. School bus times at the end of the day would be adjusted to ensure that those pupils who use the service are not affected. I would like to invite your comments regarding this proposal, so please email any responses you may have to stmonicas@bury.gov.uk. A meeting with parents regarding this proposed change has been scheduled for **Monday February 10th at 6:00pm**. At this meeting I will share any comments received and then outline the next steps.

I also hope you are aware that when St Monica's was placed in Special Measures in January 2018, a Directive Academy Order was issued as a matter of course, meaning that the school is required to convert to Academy status. Over the past twelve months our focus in school has been on rapid improvement, and though the school is no longer judged as Inadequate it is not national policy to revoke an order of this type. Therefore, the process of conversion will now begin and the school is scheduled to join the St Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Multi-Academy Trust. As soon as I am able to share further details with you I will of course arrange a meeting for parents, which I anticipate is likely to be after the February half term break. But in advance of that, let me assure you that as an Academy, St Monica's will retain its name and will continue as a Catholic school belonging to the Diocese of Salford. The only difference will be that future funding will come directly from the Department for Education rather than via the Local Authority. So for all of us it will be very much business as usual, so much so that the change should hardly be noticed.

Finally, I would like to send you my sincere thanks for your support of the school and myself over the past twelve months. Together I hope that we can continue to make St Monica's a school to be proud of, which pupils leave as committed young Catholics, ready to take the message of Christ into the world.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Foley', written in a cursive style.

Mr C Foley
Headteacher
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