

Dear Parents / Carers

**Re: Ofsted: Improvement: 22 March 2023**

I hope this letter finds you and your family well.

Earlier this term we had a routine monitoring visit from Ofsted. The purpose of this visit was to evaluate our progress since the previous full Ofsted inspection (January 2022). The monitoring visit consisted of a one-day process and this particular visit did not make provision to let families know of the inspection. A monitoring visit provides schools with one of two possible judgements:

- Leaders have made progress to improve the school... OR - Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school...

I am delighted to inform you that Ofsted have recognised that our school is making progress and we have been judged:

**Leaders have made progress to improve the school.**

We are very happy that the improvements we have made have been recognised, which is a credit to our staff for this continual period of focus and hard work. The letter we received outlines in a little more detail the progress we have made in the areas of Leadership, Governance and SEND. To share a few highlights:

- You and your leaders have prioritised improving the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Teachers receive information and training on how to support pupils with SEND. They make good use of this in the classroom to support pupils well.
- Leaders are not complacent and are continually reviewing and refining their strategies to ensure that relationships with some families improve further.
- Leaders have implemented a tiered approach to support pupils who struggle with reading.
- The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned.
- Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve the school.
- Increasing the capacity of the senior leadership team has meant that roles and responsibilities have been clearly allocated to staff.
- Governors are now monitoring the impact of leaders' actions closely through the introduction of link governors' meetings and visits.

The letter we received from Ofsted is available on our website, please follow [this link](#).

This is an important milestone for our school, which sits alongside the following achievements in the same period of time:

- **Excellence in GCSE Results 2022:** The Department for Education confirmed in November that based on academic progress we are the third highest performing school in the North East out of 171 schools. We are so proud of the hard work of our students and staff. This excellent outcome reflects significant progress for our school: in 2019 we were ranked 70th / 171 schools. Further, we are now the second highest performing school both in County Durham and the diocese.
- **Sunday Times:** Best Schools Guide: In December and based on academic attainment, for the first time in our school's history we entered into the top 250 state secondary schools in the country, moving up 64 places from 2019.
- **School Rebuild:** In July it was announced by the Department for Education that St Leonard's will be part of the next national school rebuilding programme. Plans are underway, which we will share with families once finalised.
- **Oversubscribed:** Our school has a longstanding reputation as an oversubscribed school, with Year 7 full for September 23. We have also been delighted by the significant growth of our Sixth Form. Numbers of students have increased across the past 3 years by 20% demonstrating our students feel safe, happy and supported with their progress in main school and choose to continue their academic journey with us as they prepare for higher education or employment.

The success our students are experiencing is an absolute credit to not only their excellent behaviour and attitudes, but the hard work and dedicated care of staff fully supported by you, our families.

On behalf of staff, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all families for your ongoing support for our school in many ways. I am very confident moving forward we can together, continue to improve and provide the very best Catholic education possible allowing every child to become the person God is calling them to be.

Many thanks



Chris Hammill  
Headteacher