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14 October 2010

Mr Michael Walters
The Acting Headteacher
St Anselm's Catholic School
Old Dover Road
Canterbury
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Dear Mr Walters

Ofsted monitoring of schools with no formal designation

Thank you for the help, which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 October 2010, and for the information that you provided during my visit. Please thank your chair of governors, staff and students for contributing to the inspection.

The inspection was carried out in response to serious whole-school issues raised by a complaint to Ofsted. The complaint was deemed to be a qualifying complaint that warranted further consideration under Ofsted's powers to investigate complaints about schools. As a result of the investigation, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised.

The inspection sought to establish:

- how far the education provided in the school meets the needs of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities at the school
- the contribution made by the school to the well-being of those students
- the quality of the leadership in and management of the school, including whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively.

The inspector met with the acting headteacher, a range of other staff, a group of students who have additional educational needs and/or disabilities and a representative from the local authority. Conversations were held with other students. In addition, students' behaviour during lesson changeover and lunch break was observed. Extensive scrutiny of documents, including school



improvement plans, student tracking data, information on exclusions and details of the management of complaints, was completed.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has taken appropriate steps to ensure that the education provided meets the need of the range of students. The vast majority are adequately catered for and steps are being taken to meet the needs of the few who are not. The school makes a positive contribution to the care and well-being of students and their well-being is seen as a priority by staff. Leaders and managers are taking effective steps to bring about improvement in the school's overall effectiveness and communication between home and school is improving.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the context of the school. An acting headteacher has recently been appointed and has assumed responsibility for leading the school. Senior leadership roles and responsibilities are being reviewed and the governing body is seeking to appoint a substantive headteacher. A recovery plan has been agreed to address a budget deficit. Student progress managers have been appointed to improve communications between the school and parents and carers.

The school uses information from students' previous schools and additional testing to identify their needs and to plan what guidance and support students should receive. Regular assessment and frequent reviews of students' progress identify where any additional intervention is required. Evaluation of these actions demonstrates that they have a positive impact on students' learning and personal development. Staff can refer students to the additional needs coordinator at any other time during the year if they feel that a student would benefit from support in addition to that which they are already receiving, but this is an informal process.

The school recognises that the Key Stage 4 curriculum does not meet the needs of some students. A thorough curriculum review is planned, with the intention of introducing alternative curriculum pathways that will improve the level of engagement and outcomes for less able students who are working below GCSE level.

Scrutiny of examination results and the school's own tracking data show that students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. These students say they feel well supported in lessons and that their needs are met. They report that teachers have appropriately high expectations of what they can achieve and teaching assistants have a good understanding of their particular needs. Students say that they feel safe and that there is always someone you can go to if you have a problem. Some students identified that they have previously been subjected to bullying because of their additional needs or disabilities. However, they say that any instances of bullying have been dealt with satisfactorily when they have been brought to the attention of staff. Most



students have positive attitudes towards other students and do not make an issue of their differences.

Recent changes in leadership and management are seen as being positive by both staff and students. Governors are strongly supportive, but have not been sufficiently challenging, and are not fully involved in the strategic development of the school. They were previously too dependent on information provided by the headteacher and did not hold the school to account. Governors accept that communication between the school and parents and carers was not always as good as it might have been and steps have been taken to address this.

Some complaints from parents were previously not resolved in a timely fashion and the school rightly recognises that the processes by which decisions were taken could have been completed more quickly. Governors accept that parents and carers could have been better informed about the actions taken to address the concerns that they raised.

Ofsted will use annual risk assessments to review how the school is performing, as well as any information received from parents to help decide when the school will receive its next full inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

