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19 January 2011

Mrs M McAuley
Headteacher
St Patrick's Catholic College
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TS17 9DE

Dear Mrs McAuley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic College

Following my visit to your school with Mr Peter Bannon, additional inspector, on 20 and 21 January 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Special School Improvement Committee, the Director of Children's Services for Stockton-on-Tees and the Commissioner for Schools for the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

Yours sincerely

Ms Joan McKenna
Additional inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 20 and 21 January 2010

- Ensure that all students, regardless of their academic ability, make at least satisfactory progress by:
 - improving the teaching: providing all students with work which challenges them by using assessment to inform planning
 - ensuring that students are aware of what they need to do to improve their work.

- Provide opportunities through the curriculum for students to develop their literacy and ICT skills to at least satisfactory level.

- Ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive in their learning and make at least satisfactory progress by:
 - developing an effective support system
 - providing additional physical and human resources to support their learning.

- Increase the effectiveness of the leadership and management at all levels, including the governing body, by:
 - revising the school improvement plan so that targets are both challenging and realistic, are accompanied by clear action plans and have success criteria that are linked to outcomes for students
 - establishing a rigorous monitoring, evaluation and review procedure in all areas of the school's work to establish a clear view of where improvements are most needed, rigorously pursue them and ensure that outcomes for students improve
 - ensuring that the governing body holds the school to account through challenge, support and setting a clear direction for its work.

Special measures: monitoring of St Patrick's Catholic College

Report from the second monitoring inspection from 20 and 21 January 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and the executive headteacher, both of whom are from the Outwood Grange Family of Schools, groups of senior and middle leaders, a groups of students, the chair of the special school improvement committee, and two other members of the committee who are both local authority representatives, one of whom is also the local authority's principal adviser.

Context

The Outwood Grange Family of Schools continues to run the school through the National Leader of Education (NLE) programme contracted by the local authority. Since the last monitoring inspection, nine teachers have left the school and five have joined, three of whom are temporary and two permanent. An inclusion manager, a literacy consultant and a teaching assistant have also taken up post. Two members of staff are currently absent through illness and four are on maternity leave, with five supply teachers covering these vacancies. The Pope Benedict XVI Federation of schools, of which St Patrick's is a member, is being dissolved with effect from the 1 May 2011. The special school improvement committee, to which the governing body of the federation has delegated powers of governance for St Patrick's, has had some changes of membership, including a new chair, a new local authority representative and some new foundation governors. It has set up an appointments committee to undertake the appointment of a substantive headteacher.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The results of the Year 11 examinations in 2010 were higher than in 2009. These results were above the national average on many measures. The proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE rose by 13% to 83%. The proportion gaining five or more good grades including English and mathematics rose even more sharply, by 20%, to 70%. These were the school's highest ever results. These are positive improvements and show considerably better progress being made by that group of students overall than leavers in recent years. Targets set were very challenging and some, albeit a minority, were met. Nevertheless, achievement in English and mathematics was still not good enough. When results are compared with similar schools, achievement in English was in the bottom 2% of schools nationally, and in mathematics was almost in the bottom 25%. However, the increasing emphasis on high attainment is raising students' expectations of what they can achieve but there has not been enough time to compensate fully for earlier underachievement, despite the recent improvements. The better quality provision that brought about the higher levels of attainment in 2010 is continuing to have an impact across

the school. A further rise in examination results is expected in 2011 and the accuracy of predictions in 2010 promotes confidence in using assessment data rigorously.

A key factor in the rising standards is the increasing rigour of assessment, tracking and analysis of students' progress and effort and the action taken as a result. Assessment information from the 'Praising Stars' programme, through which tracking is undertaken, is thoroughly analysed against a range of relevant criteria to establish rates of progress for individual students and different groups across all year groups and in all subjects. Underperformance is identified and intervention plans are put in place, with teachers and leaders held accountable for the impact of these actions. This sharper focus and targeting of action is resulting in improvements in attainment across all year groups and an increase in the rate of progress. Improved quality of teaching and learning is also contributing to better attainment and rates of progress.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all students, regardless of their academic ability, make at least satisfactory progress by improving teaching and the use of assessment information – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The 'Consequences' system of behaviour management is continuing to have a significant impact on improving students' behaviour and approach to learning. Its use by teachers is promoting greater consistency of both expectations and action taken when these are not met. Students generally do as asked by their teachers. When given the opportunity to be actively involved in lessons, which is more frequent than previously, they respond well, showing more engagement and taking more responsibility for their learning. However, there remain lessons, which are not structured in a way that enables or demands students to be independent, and a minority are still sometimes too passive, although even then, most still try to do as asked. Attendance, although above the national average, is lower so far this year than for the same period last year. Students are very positive about the changes within the school and the impact of the 'Consequences' system to which they attribute a climate more conducive to learning. Students say that lessons are better structured, there are more opportunities to be actively involved and that they have a better understanding of where they are in their learning.

The effectiveness of provision

Much attention continues to be given to improving teaching, which is having a positive effect. Inadequate teaching has been considerably reduced since the last monitoring inspection and that remaining is being robustly tackled. The proportion of good teaching is steadily increasing, although it is not yet consistently high to ensure good rates of progress.. Some staffing changes have been helpful, such as in English where a few permanent appointments mean that there is now a team in place to undertake developments in the subject, albeit at these are at an early stage. The tighter procedures are also continuing to

be helpful. The common lesson planning format, for example, is improving quality as teachers act upon the requirement to think about key aspects identified to be important to effective teaching. Likewise, the implementation of the marking policy is resulting in better feedback and guidance for students. Nevertheless, there remains inconsistency. In the most effective teaching: lesson planning is detailed; some attention is given to the differing needs of students; the level of challenge is appropriate for the range of students; and interesting activities are given which require students to take some responsibility for their learning.

In many lessons, these are not yet strong enough features. Teachers do not always ensure that the pitch of the lessons or activity is right for all. They do not always check the understanding of all students and not enough reference is made to course criteria, levels or grades to help ensure that students know what to do to improve. Even in some of the stronger lessons, meeting students' learning needs remains a relative weakness, with all students doing identical work and learning at similar pace.

The impact of action to improve assessment is evident, although that, too, is not yet consistent. Feedback through marking is much improved, with some good examples. However, marking is still too infrequent and lacking in detail. Although the use of targets is more widespread than previously, not all students are clear about what they are or how to reach them. Sound actions are being taken to improve teaching and assessment with appropriate procedures and requirements in place, professional development and training for the teachers and specific support for individuals identified as needing it.

Concerted action to provide better opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills has been taken since the last monitoring inspection. St Patrick's Achievement Resource Centre (SPARC) is a popular resource that is used regularly to raise the profile of reading.. Staff have received training in the promotion of literacy and as a result, there is more emphasis on developing all aspects of literacy in lessons. Displays in each classroom are used well to develop students' literacy skills in relation to vocabulary and using punctuation marks accurately.

Developments in provision for information and communication technology (ICT) have led to Staff receiving training and the installation of a new ICT suite for cross-curricular work. These developments have resulted in improvements in subject specific ICT resources in, for example, science and design technology, which are leading to greater use of ICT in these subjects. There is evidence of the positive impact of these developments. All students in Year 11 last year gained accreditation in the subject, almost 80% with distinction. Similar levels of attainment are predicted for current Year 11 students.. Despite these changes, the school has still to ensure that ICT skills are developed consistently across the curriculum. Additionally, non-specialist teaching of ICT in Key Stage 3 and weaknesses in the curriculum remain.

Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved considerably since the last monitoring inspection. Staffing has been strengthened, with an assistant headteacher having overall responsibility and a new inclusion manager leading on



day-to-day aspects of provision. There has been a review of the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A comprehensive and well-organised programme of intervention and mentoring has been put in place for them and for others requiring support to catch up in literacy or numeracy. However, it is too early to measure the impact. The school recognises that there is still more to do in relation to evaluating the provision rigorously and in improving the quality of provision made for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities as a matter of routine in lessons. Teachers have greater knowledge of the students they are teaching and often record their needs in some detail on their lesson plans. However, this is too rarely translated into meaningful action to meet students' needs. The team of teaching assistants has been added to and training provided to develop their understanding of their role. Some play a proactive part in supporting individuals and groups in lessons, but this is variable.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Provide opportunities through the curriculum for students to develop their literacy and ICT skills – good
- Ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive in their learning and make at least satisfactory progress by developing support and providing additional resources – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The good progress evident in relation to leadership and management at the time of the last monitoring inspection has continued. The strategic and strong direction provided by the acting headteacher and executive headteacher from the Outwood Grange NLE team is instrumental to the rate of change and improvement. Suitable actions have been taken, with appropriate structures and processes now largely in place. The curriculum has been revised. There is regular and rigorous monitoring of the progress that students are making through the 'Praising Stars' programme and of the provision that is leading to it, including the quality of teaching. Evaluation of the impact of actions taken is central to the process of driving improvement. The greater accountability that this promotes is increasingly accepted and acted upon at all levels. Targeted training is sharpening staffs' understanding of the changes required. For example, a 'transforming middle leaders' course is attended by teaching and non-teaching staff and draws on the wider expertise within the Outwood Grange team. The changes underway within the school and the impact they are having have enthused many staff and secured their commitment to developments. Nevertheless, the quality of leadership remains very mixed, especially at middle level. All staff are benefiting from the developments taking place and there is support targeted at areas of weakness. The Outwood Grange leaders are rightly focusing on ensuring that all of the new procedures and requirements are fully understood and effectively implemented to consolidate and accelerate the progress being made within the school.

Members of the special school improvement committee use their expertise well to provide challenge and hold the school to account. The committee is planning for the transition in

arrangements for governance for when the federation ceases to exist. It has clear plans to set up a committee to oversee the appointment of a new, substantive headteacher.

The school's specialism is beginning to have a greater impact on students' experiences and outcomes in the specialist subjects and beyond, although work is at an early stage. There have been some improvements in students' attainment in both ICT and mathematics, although weaknesses remain, especially in mathematics. There is more use of ICT across the curriculum and the mathematics staff are leading on developing the use of hand-held computers in lessons.

The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of adults working with children continue to meet requirements.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including the governing body, by improving school improvement planning and related action, establishing effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating and improving governance – good

External support

The support provided by the Outwood Grange NLE team is a major factor in the school improving at a good rate. The expertise of the support team is deployed well within the school and wider links are used effectively. There have been changes to personnel involved with the school on behalf of the local authority and the diocese, but Outwood Grange staff continue to be held clearly to account in relation to the agreed contract. The local authority comprehensive review of the school's work in November 2010 has contributed to developing the special school improvement committee's role in relation to monitoring progress.