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13 March 2011

Mr N Hurn
Interim Executive Headteacher
St Wilfrid's RC College
Temple Park Road
South Shields
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Dear Mr Hurn,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Wilfrid's RC College

Following my visit with Pankaj Gulab and Robert Birtwell, additional inspectors, to your college on 17 and 18 March 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 first monitoring inspection since the college became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 – satisfactory

Newly-Qualified Teachers may not be appointed

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for South Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

Mark Wilson
Lead Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 18 October 2010

- As a matter of urgency, raise students' attainment and improve their progress in English, mathematics and science by:
 - ensuring that both higher-attaining and average-attaining students achieve the grades expected of them in English, mathematics and science
 - ensuring attainment is at least in line with the national average in each subject, for students currently in Year 11 and for all subsequent year groups
 - increasing the proportion of students gaining A and A* grades in all subjects.
- Improve the skills of leaders and managers and the governing body as a matter of urgency, by:
 - making clear to the senior leaders their key role in all aspects of the school's performance
 - ensuring that senior leaders give clear direction to staff at all levels about their role in school improvement, and spell out their accountability for this
 - ensuring that senior leaders have clearly-defined roles and line management responsibilities and are able to demonstrate their contribution to school improvement
 - improving the skills and effectiveness of subject leaders in English, mathematics and science to raise attainment and inspire ambition in their departments
 - ensuring that the governing body has a full and accurate picture of the school's effectiveness, through direct monitoring of the school's work, from which they can support and challenge the school and hold the headteacher to account.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons, especially English, mathematics and science, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' use of assessment information supports students' learning
 - raising teachers' expectations of how hard students should work in lessons
 - improving the quality of teachers' marking so that it clearly informs students of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the curriculum in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3, by ensuring that it provides continuity and clear progression and prepares students for work in Key Stage 4.

Special measures: monitoring of St Wilfrid's RC College

Report from the first monitoring inspection from 17 to 18 March 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the college's work, including 35 part lessons as well as some shorter visits to lessons, scrutinised documents, met with a group of students, the interim executive headteacher, key staff including those from other schools, the Chair of the Governing Body, two representatives from the local authority and the School Improvement Partner.

Context

Since the inspection in October 2010 the headteacher has left the college. A highly-experienced headteacher, a National Leader of Education, from an outstanding partner school is now acting as interim executive headteacher. The deputy headteacher from the same school is acting as St Wilfrid's associate deputy headteacher. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and a new local authority governor. A senior leader from another local school is supporting the science department temporarily.

Student's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Predictions for the 2011 examinations, for the current Year 11, who had similar starting points to the previous cohort, suggest 90% of students may attain five or more A* to C grade GCSEs. This would be higher than the target and five percentage points higher than in 2010. The proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics is predicted to be around 59%; while slightly lower than the target, this would be 10 percentage points higher than in 2010. The proportion of students who have already obtained a grade C by taking their GCSE examinations early in English and mathematics indicates the school is better placed for the predictions to be realised. However, in science, while the proportion of students predicted in 2011 to get two GCSEs graded A* to C would be an improvement on the 2010 results, this would be 10% below the target. Staff absence in science is still a major barrier to improvement. The proportion of students currently expected to gain A* and A grades at GCSE level in English, mathematics and science is improving; indications are that the proportion attained will be higher than in 2010, but lower than the 2010 national average. This picture of improving progress was identified in the lessons observed, but found to be too variable; especially in science and for the more-able students. Through its improved monitoring of student performance the school has provided much better targeted support for students to help them improve.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise students' attainment and improve their progress in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

Other relevant student outcomes

Students interviewed said behaviour is improving because teachers now have higher expectations. Students demonstrate welcoming and positive behaviours. However, in too many lessons they remain passive, preferring to let the teachers work harder than they do. The development of students' understanding of the part they play in their learning is not helped by the variability in teachers' expectations for students to undertake homework.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is improving and lessons are becoming more engaging but there remain too many inconsistencies. A common lesson planning format has been introduced and short-term planning of the curriculum is being focused on. Setting by ability has been introduced and is providing a better focus on students' learning needs. However, too often teachers do not use the information about students' performance to meet their differing abilities, even within classes grouped by ability. In addition, the use of learning support assistants is not always well planned for or deployed. In some of the weaker lessons a slow learning pace resulted when students were not sufficiently challenged, especially when the lesson was too teacher-led. In some lessons it is not made clear enough at the start what a specific student or groups have to learn. Inconsistencies remain in the quality of marking and feedback students receive. However, the proportion of satisfactory and better lessons is rising as a result of the acting deputy headteacher's strong lead in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Leaders have started the process of reviewing schemes of work in English, science and mathematics. They are aware that more-accurate student performance data are needed to enable the curriculum to be best matched to students' needs.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in all lessons, especially English, mathematics and science – satisfactory
- Improve the curriculum in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3, by ensuring that it provides continuity and clear progression and prepares students for work in Key Stage 4 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The key drivers for the improvements so far have been the vision, clarity and direction provided by the executive headteacher's strong lead. Consequently, leaders have a clearer understanding of their roles. Systems and structures have been introduced giving staff confidence to take the improvement steps needed. Through on-going coaching and training leaders now have a better understanding of how to lead; hence managers are becoming leaders. Heads of departments are becoming more involved in reviewing the effectiveness of their subject and holding staff to account for raising attainment, especially in English and

mathematics, but less so in science. It is still early days but leaders see that they need to develop further their focus on teaching and learning through their use of monitoring and self-evaluation. Leaders also recognise the need to improve the quality of data from teacher assessments so that students are challenged well and make good progress. The governing body has received bespoke training which has given it a much clearer understanding of the skills it needs. Through the chair's strong leadership the governing body now sees its next steps as using information from the college's monitoring framework to hold leaders to account better.

The specialist subject areas of mathematics and computing are not directly driving the college's improvement but are involved in the on-going development activities, such as the voluntary teaching and learning group.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the skills of leaders and managers and the governing body as a matter of urgency – satisfactory

External support

Very strong support has been provided by the partner school via its training division. Through the executive headteacher's contacts some other local schools have also given generously of their staff time to support St Wilfrid's. The local authority's statement of action meets requirements. The resulting support is very effective, as is the School Improvement Partner.