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Headteacher
Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College
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Dear Mr Van Cauwelaert

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 October 2011 for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your governors and students.

Since the last inspection some significant changes to staffing have taken place. These include a new deputy headteacher appointed in April 2010, and a restructured and now extended leadership team appointed in April 2011. All teaching and learning responsibilities within departments have been redesigned and some new appointments made.

As a result of the inspection on 20 January 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE level including English and mathematics has increased by 17 percentage points from 2009 to 2011. Now, most students leave with five or more passes at A* to C, which is a considerable improvement since the 2009 results. Challenging targets are now set and all staff have been trained in the use and analysis of data. The proportion of students making expected progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 in English and science has seen strong improvement. However, progress in mathematics has been marginal. As a result the school has taken decisive action by making a number of key appointments in the leadership of this department and entering the whole cohort early, already securing 52% A* to C grades at GCSE level in Year 10. Students are now in targeted groups as a result of this and any student who did not make expected progress will be re-entered in November. Discrete parent consultation evenings take place for students not making expected progress towards their targets in addition to the usual parents' evenings.

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Progress in the sixth form is uneven. Results for 2011 were disappointing overall although some subjects have seen clear improvements in results, such as geography, politics and physical education. Issues around retention of students from AS to A2 level have had a negative impact on results, so entry requirements for some subjects have been increased and monitoring and tracking of individual progress intensified, particularly at AS level. Some good quality teaching was seen in the sixth form and students spoke highly of the support available to them and of an improvement in facilities since the last inspection. Where good teaching was seen, students were enabled, through meticulous planning and assessment, to take ownership of their own learning. For example, in a design and technology lesson, students worked independently on their projects using bespoke written feedback from their teacher. The teacher was a facilitator to their learning and able to spend time with those students who needed extra support.

Assessment has improved through a concerted focus on developing assessment to support learning through 'steps to success'. All schemes for learning have been reviewed to ensure that opportunities for assessment are not missed. In the best lessons, clearly focused learning objectives and outcomes relate directly to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and students of all abilities clearly understand what they are expected to achieve in those lessons. In the weaker lessons, 'success criteria' are not differentiated to allow all students to make good progress. Senior and middle leaders are reducing variation both in and between departments successfully through coaching and performance management.

The headteacher and members of the governing body have made valuable strategic decisions to enhance capacity further, including new appointments to the senior team. New systems for data analysis, monitoring and tracking have served to increase accountability. Every member of staff with responsibility for a GCSE, AS or A2 class now has an interview with senior leaders to analyse and account for their results. Members of the leadership team have analysed their individual strengths and weaknesses in order to work most effectively together.

Each department now meets weekly for strategic planning and all staff with teaching and learning responsibility have undergone leadership and management training. The local authority and leadership consultants have supported the school in refining professional development to ensure whole-school priorities are met and that there is a measurable impact on outcomes. Middle leaders are monitoring their departments more rigorously through learning walks and work scrutiny although opportunities are missed for this group of leaders to work more collaboratively.

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

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010:

- Raise attainment and improve progress, particularly in mathematics and English at Key Stage 4.
- Share best practice in order to remove inconsistencies in the quality of assessment to increase its impact on students' learning.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form in those subjects where it is not high enough.