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21 June 2012

Mr R Varey  
Headteacher  
Blessed Trinity RC College  
Ormerod Road  
Burnley  
Lancashire  
BB10 3AA

Dear Mr Varey

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blessed Trinity RC College**

Following my visit with Robert Birtwell and Andrew Henderson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 19 and 20 June 2012, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2011. 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 - satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed. There are no restrictions on the subject areas to which such appointments can be made.

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 Executive Director for Children and Young People for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2011**

- Develop and implement a sharp and focused programme to improve the achievement of all students, to include:
  - clear, appropriate and ambitious targets for each student, carefully explained to them and their parents or carers
  - systematic evaluation of progress data so that strategic action can quickly be taken when groups of students, such as boys, do not make appropriate progress
  - intervention to address any gaps in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology that might restrict students' progress.
  
- Implement as a matter of urgency, a concerted and whole-school programme to improve behaviour in lessons and around the school, so that learning can proceed effectively for all students.
  
- Develop a whole-school teaching and learning strategy to increase the proportion of teaching which is good and outstanding, through:
  - greater precision in the framing of learning objectives to enable students to understand more clearly what they need to learn, and that relate more precisely to their prior attainment
  - planning that includes a range of tasks and activities in each lesson to suit the abilities and learning styles of all students
  - using more active learning approaches, so that students are able to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
  
- Improve the strategic leadership of the college by ensuring that:
  - self-evaluation is accurate, analytical and thorough
  - strategic development planning clearly identifies the college's key priorities, in order to direct the energy of all staff most effectively
  - action plans are precise, time-limited, evaluated and effective
  - the strategic plan is regularly reviewed and updated in the light of progress
  - senior leaders and the governing body communicate regularly with parents and carers, and systematically seek and act upon their views
  - the governing body maintains a clear view of the performance of the school and effectively holds leaders and managers to account.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Blessed Trinity RC College**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 June 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed 29 parts of lessons, three of which were observed jointly with managers from the school. A small number of shorter visits to lessons were also conducted, including with a focus on students' behaviour, their adoption of safe working practices and attitudes to learning. Inspectors undertook a scrutiny of students' work, including a focused scrutiny of work from a small sample of students in Year 9 across all of their subjects. Inspectors met with groups of students, representatives from the governing body and from the local authority and held meetings with a wide range of staff from the school.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection, the previous headteacher has retired and the new headteacher took up his post in April 2012. There has been little staff turnover and levels of teacher absence have reduced.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Inspection evidence confirms that achievement continues to rise across the school. In particular, the school's estimates for 2012 indicate a small rise in overall levels of attainment for students in Year 11. Although these estimates are considered to be more robust and reliable than was previously the case, the school has taken a cautious view in arriving at predictions for performance across the full range of students' courses. Partly as a result of this approach, estimates for English, mathematics and science are below the school's own challenging targets in all three subjects. For example, although an improvement is predicted in mathematics when compared to outcomes in 2011, levels of attainment are likely to remain below the national average. Performance in mathematics remains the most significant brake on overall levels of students' achievement because the quality of teaching in mathematics is not yet consistently strong enough to overcome more rapidly the legacy of underachievement in this subject. Despite a small fall predicted in attainment in English, particularly for girls, overall levels of progress in English are expected to be broadly in line with the national picture. Better teaching, improvements to the curriculum and stronger subject leadership are all factors contributing to improvements in achievement in science. Similar gains are also apparent elsewhere in the curriculum, for example, in some design and technology courses.

While there is expected to be little difference in levels of attainment between girls and boys in the results for 2012, the schools systems for evaluating the rates of progress made by different groups of students are underdeveloped. As a result, the school is unable to identify clearly the impact of intervention and other provision on the progress made by students

with special educational needs, those eligible for free-school meals or by higher-attaining students from their starting points on entry to the school. For example, the school's estimates for the attainment of higher-attaining students are more modest and show greater variability across the curriculum than those estimates of the proportion of students on course to reach grade C or higher in their GCSE subjects. This reflects the school's focus on performance at this latter threshold and also the inconsistencies apparent in the effectiveness of teaching in meeting the needs of more-able students in all their lessons.

A wide range of innovative and often bespoke provision is in place to meet the needs of students most vulnerable to underachievement. This support is helping many students to engage better with school and their learning, and is effective at removing barriers to their participation and achievement. For example, the impact of literacy intervention provided for students in Key Stage 3 can be seen in the rising trend in reading ages for those students accessing this support. However, the impact of these programmes on students' academic outcomes is less clear because existing systems do not enable key staff to examine a range of indicators, including achievement, attendance and behavioural referrals, in evaluating the impact of the support provided.

Students' progress in lessons continues to improve. This is because the overall quality of teaching is stronger than at the time of previous monitoring inspections. However, although good plans are in place to promote literacy more consistently across the school, its impact on students' progress is uneven. For example, in some lessons, missed opportunities to support the development of students' speaking and listening skills are holding back the progress of some more-able students in particular.

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

- develop and implement a sharp and focused programme to improve the achievement of all students – satisfactory

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching at the school continues to improve. In the majority of lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good or better. Teachers are receptive and open to advice and guidance and many are benefitting directly from support that has been identified or that they have sought for themselves. In the best lessons, teachers explain clearly how progression in learning will be developed and use assessment information well to plan work that meets the needs of all the students in the class. Opportunities are planned for students to review their learning and secure their understanding of key concepts and ideas, sometimes through peer or self assessment. For example, in an outstanding geography lesson for mixed-ability Year 8 students, interest and engagement was assured from the outset through images of urban centres and transport networks seen from the air at night. Students' contributed their thoughts and ideas and the teacher probed and extended their understanding through questioning that challenged the students to reason and justify their answers. In completing tasks linked to the ideas developed in the lesson, the teacher provided activities that were adapted to stretch the most able and also provided support for

those students who required guidance to access the tasks set. In some examples of less effective teaching seen during the inspection, too little questioning expected more students to respond in greater depth, or all students in the class, regardless of the range of prior skills, knowledge and understanding, were given the same task to complete at broadly similar rates.

A much greater consistency in the quality of marking was evident during the inspection, and some outstanding examples of written feedback provided to students were seen, for example, in art. Overall, marking is generally regular, and provides praise and supportive comments to students about their work. However, not all marking provides feedback to students that is sufficiently precise for them to act more effectively on the advice provided.

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

- develop a whole-school teaching and learning strategy to increase the proportion of teaching which is good and outstanding – satisfactory

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

As at the previous monitoring inspection, behaviour continues to improve. In all areas around the school, there is a strong sense of students' self-discipline in response to the school's expectations. Students respond promptly to staff instructions and levels of supervision are unobtrusive and effective. Although there was a brief rise in referrals to the school's inclusion facility and in fixed-term exclusions, this was a reflection of the higher expectations of students' behaviour established by the new headteacher earlier in the term. The pattern of exclusions and referrals has since returned to previous levels as these expectations have become embedded. Previously higher levels of referrals of students with special educational needs have been much reduced. This is because of the impact of a range of provision now in place to support students in accessing the curriculum and engaging them more effectively in their education.

Behaviour in lessons is rarely a barrier to learning; staff and students report that, in the great majority of lessons, learning can proceed without interruption or disruption. However, in a few instances, the behaviour of a small number of students does disturb learning. Students say that this occurs when lessons lack challenge or they have few opportunities for their more active involvement, or when staff do not follow closely and consistently the school's behaviour code. Issues of punctuality to lessons have largely been resolved and almost all lessons are able to proceed without the pace of learning being affected by the late arrival of some students, including following breaks and lunchtimes.

Students confirm that bullying is rare and they say that they feel very safe in school. They understand well the importance of safe practices in design and technology workshops and science laboratories. Attendance remains above average and, although the pattern of a slight rise in persistent absence continues from the previous monitoring inspection, it remains below the national average overall.

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

- implement a concerted and whole-school programme to improve behaviour in lessons and around the school, so that learning can proceed effectively – good

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The new headteacher and senior team have built further on the impetus for improvement evident at previous monitoring visits. There is a greater clarity of purpose and staff are working together effectively with a focus on improving outcomes for students. A restructuring of the leadership team is underway with the aim of clarifying roles and accountabilities and to distribute leadership responsibilities more effectively. A new structure is expected to be in place for the start of the next academic year. The governing body continues to provide effective levels of support and challenge for the school.

While a focus of much of the school's work has been to secure improved outcomes for students taking external examinations in 2012, a greater emphasis is increasingly evident on building sustainable improvements across all aspects of the school's work. A regular programme for monitoring the quality of teaching is in place and is enabling the school to provide support and challenge where necessary. The school's records of monitoring provide evidence of a pattern of improvement in teaching over time and identify clearly those aspects where support is needed. However, while the confidence of managers at all levels in leading improvements continues to grow, further support is needed for the skills of middle leaders in particular to fully and more consistently support the drive for further improvement.

Improvements in the tracking of students' progress are providing an increasingly robust picture of performance across subject areas, although inspection evidence indicates that there are weaknesses in the reliability of assessment data in mathematics at Key Stage 3. In addition, systems to enable leaders to accurately track progress across different groups of students are less well developed. Support for literacy is becoming more established, although, in some subject areas, the interpretation of this focus limits its impact to an emphasis on key words or subject specific vocabulary. Not all subject areas use opportunities to promote students' speaking and listening skills as a support for the development of their wider literacy skills.

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

- improve the strategic leadership of the college – satisfactory

### **External support**

The focus of external support for the school continues to work in building greater capacity within the school to continue improvement. As a result, the school is becoming less reliant on additional capacity from external sources to maintain this drive. However, the work of the local authority and partner secondary schools has provided valuable support for developments in English and mathematics in particular.