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9 November 2012

Mr Richard 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 Charles Lowry HMI and Nell Banfield, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 November 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 fourth 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 - good

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 pupils, to include:
  - clear, appropriate and ambitious targets for each pupil, 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 pupils, such as boys, do not make appropriate progress
  - intervention to address any gaps in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology that might restrict pupils' 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 pupils.
  
- 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 pupils 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 pupils
  - using more active learning approaches, so that pupils 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 November 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed 27 parts of lessons, four of which were observed jointly with leaders from the school. A small number of shorter visits to lessons were also conducted, including with a focus on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and on the quality of support provided for pupils with special educational needs. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, representatives from the governing body and from the local authority and held meetings with a wide range of staff from the school.

#### **Context**

The process of restructuring leadership roles and responsibilities has been completed. There has been little staff turnover and levels of teacher absence have continued to fall.

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

The school continues to make progress in raising pupils' achievement. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C GCSE grades in 2012 rose by six percentage points compared with the previous year and is now in line with the national figure. The proportion of pupils reaching this benchmark when English and mathematics GCSEs are included also rose, although it remains below the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that an increasing proportion of pupils are on track to achieve more highly in 2013. As a result of improvements in the quality of assessment and tracking information, the school has greater confidence in its predictions of performance, particularly in Key Stage 4.

Stronger leadership and improvements to teaching have made a significant contribution to gains in achievement, particularly in English. Although some improvement is also evident in mathematics, attainment remains below average and rates of progress are rising only slowly. This is because not enough teaching is good or better to more rapidly eradicate previous underachievement in the subject. Weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum in mathematics mean that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not developed well over time. The school has identified mathematics as a key priority in its development planning. Concerted and effective action is being taken to bring about improvement to provision and outcomes in mathematics, including in partnership with another secondary school.

The impact of targeted intervention has helped to improve boys' progress across a range of their subjects. Much improved systems are in place to monitor the progress made by pupils with special educational needs. As a result, levels of attainment for many pupils who require extra support are rising. However, gains are much more modest for those pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra money provided by the government). This is because the

school does not evaluate well enough the impact of the actions it takes to support those pupils who receive this extra funding, or target its support more effectively. In addition, inconsistencies in the levels of challenge provided in some lessons means that not enough more-able pupils reach the highest grades in their courses.

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 pupils – satisfactory

## **The quality of teaching**

The overall profile of teaching at the school continues to strengthen. Inspection evidence confirms the accuracy of the school's own evaluation of teaching which also reflects this improving picture. As a result of targeted support and a range of professional development opportunities, a higher proportion of teaching is now consistently good than has been the case at previous monitoring inspections. There is a widespread willingness amongst most teachers to work to continue this improvement, evidenced by their receptiveness to advice and support. Although no outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection, good teaching was evident in most subjects across the school, particularly in English.

In the better lessons, teachers consider pupils' different starting points in their planning and adapt tasks and activities accordingly. Pupils are clear about the purpose of the lesson and about the important steps in learning for them to make progress. Literacy is a strong focus in the best lessons and pupils are encouraged to read for understanding or develop their speaking and listening skills through focussed discussion work. For example, in a very effective mathematics lesson for Year 9 pupils, the teacher had planned activities to consolidate key skills and identify pupils' misconceptions. The pupils understood clearly the progression in their learning because the teacher had identified this explicitly in her planning and shared it with them. The pupils consolidated their learning by discussing and justifying their methods with each other before sharing them with the class.

Where teaching is less effective, opportunities for pupils' active involvement are much more limited. Question and answer sessions demand little of the pupils and too many pupils do not participate effectively. As a result, many pupils, including the most able, do not achieve as well as they could. In some lessons, teachers are too quick to guide pupils to solutions or to provide the right answer, rather than expecting pupils to contribute their own ideas or think more deeply for themselves.

Marking is usually regular and provides praise and support for pupils about their work. However, although there is much greater consistency in the approaches used by teachers, some of the guidance provided is not sharp or specific enough to help pupils to improve. Not all marking is consistently effective, for example, in promoting improvements in pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation.

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 – good

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Improvements in pupils' behaviour in and around school have been maintained, underpinned by very effective management systems that identify where further support is needed. Attendance remains above average, although the levels of absence of those pupils supported through the pupil premium has risen slightly compared with the same period last year. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that very few lessons are disturbed by the poor behaviour of other pupils. They report that the school's focus on high expectations of conduct and uniform has contributed well to this. Pupils' understanding of different forms of bullying is developed well through the curriculum. However, a small number of pupils do not understand clearly enough how inappropriate words and phrases could make different groups of people feel uncomfortable or upset. Although tutor time is used well to reinforce the school's expectations in relation to behaviour and attitudes to learning, opportunities are missed to use this time to support learning and wider personal development more effectively.

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 effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body in driving the school forward has continued to improve. The headteacher is providing a clear focus and vision for the future direction of the school, which is widely shared by staff. Inspection evidence confirms the trajectory of improvement evident in the school's own self-evaluation. Stronger management systems across many aspects of the school's work are becoming increasingly well established. Impact can be seen in the improvements in pupils' achievement and behaviour, in the overall quality of teaching and in other aspects of provision, such as the effectiveness of the support for pupils with special educational needs.

Performance management and appraisal processes are an increasingly effective element in supporting this improvement. Decisions about pay progression are closely linked to teachers' targets and the governing body are playing their part in this. However, there is scope for subject leaders to be more fully involved in reviewing the progress made by their teams as part of this process. The governing body receives regular updates on the school's performance, although these updates do not always provide sufficient information for governors to be able to check performance against national standards. For example, although the governing body receives information about the performance of different groups of pupils, it has not held the school to account sufficiently for the impact of pupil premium funding.

The headteacher has placed a strong emphasis on distributing leadership responsibility more widely and in holding leaders at all levels to account for further improvement. Subject leaders in particular are contributing more effectively to improving the quality of teaching and learning. For example, support provided by senior managers for leadership and team working in mathematics is ensuring a greater urgency for improvement. However, subject leaders do not focus sufficiently on the progress made by groups of pupils when evaluating the effectiveness of their teams.

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

- improve the strategic leadership of the college – good

### **External support**

The local authority and other external partners have provided valuable support for the school, including in support of ensuring greater leadership capacity in mathematics. The nature of this support, however, has been carefully shaped by the school to ensure it meets its development needs. This reflects the school's own increased capacity to further drive improvement across many aspects of its work.