

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566932  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
hcarnall@cfbt.com



23 November 2012

Mr Ian Smith  
Executive Headteacher  
St Benedict's Catholic High School  
Red Lonning  
Hensingham  
Whitehaven  
Cumbria  
CA28 8UG

Dear Mr Smith

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Benedict's Catholic High School**

Following my visit with Vincent Ashworth Her Majesty's Inspector and Jim Bennetts, additional inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2012. 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 in all subjects.

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, the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Lancaster.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012**

- Increase the amount of good or better teaching so that attainment rises and progress accelerates for all groups of students, especially in English and mathematics, by:
  - using assessment information to plan learning activities that specifically match the needs and potential of every student in the class
  - providing stimulating learning experiences and environments that will fully engage students, increase the value they place on their education and improve behaviour within their classroom.
  
- Develop leadership and management at all levels to ensure more rapid and sustainable school improvement by:
  - making more frequent and better use of data to evaluate all aspects of the school's effectiveness and to inform future planning
  - strengthening quality assurance procedures in order to drive improvements at a faster pace
  - increasing the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in preventing bullying and harassment.
  
- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
  - improving the management of behaviour in lessons so that learning is not interrupted
  - acting as a matter of urgency to ensure that all students feel free from harassment and bullying and are confident that any concerns they have will be acted on quickly and effectively by the school
  - ensuring attendance continues to improve and does not fall below the national average.

## **Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Benedict's Catholic High School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 November 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents including behaviour logs, results achieved by students in tests, records of lesson observations done by school leaders, and a report written by local authority advisers. Twenty two lessons were seen, of which four were joint observations with school leaders. Inspectors held meetings with a group of students, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, heads of department, year group leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the adviser to the governing body, a member of staff from Millom School who has coached teachers, and two representatives from the local authority. Telephone discussions were held with two parents.

#### **Context**

The executive headteacher continues to lead the school, with the support of the acting headteacher. A new deputy headteacher, head of sixth form and head of science have been appointed. Several members of the science department and the teacher responsible for organising support for students with special educational needs have given up the responsibilities they formerly held and their pay has been reduced. Responsibility for special educational needs support has transferred temporarily to an assistant headteacher. The governors are seeking to appoint a permanent headteacher; the executive headteacher will continue to lead the school until this is accomplished. There has been substantial change to the governing body; around half of the governors have been appointed since the first monitoring inspection.

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

Achievement is rising. In 2012, 60% of students attained five or more GCSE qualifications including English and mathematics, at grades A\* to C. This is a marked improvement on the previous year's performance. More students made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics, although in both subjects, progress rates remained below the national level. The gap between the targets set for students and their actual performance is beginning to close. In lessons observed, students made strong progress in mathematics and English. Progress in science is starting to quicken as a result of improved teaching and courses that better meet students' needs, although weaknesses in the organisation of the science curriculum at Key Stage 3 mean that standards are slower to rise because teachers need to spend time filling gaps in students' knowledge.

The school is rightly focusing on improving the achievement of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government) and those with special educational needs: there are indications of improved achievement for these groups.

Results in the sixth form are improving gradually and are similar to those found nationally overall. There is some variation across subjects. Achievement is too low in science in the sixth form, partly because some students are entered for courses when they have not achieved sufficiently high standards in Key Stage 4.

The school places a strong focus on improving students' standards of literacy. A programme to help students who have reading difficulties is successfully accelerating their progress. School leaders have a very clear picture of students' achievements and ensure that all teachers have accurate information as to what students know and can do. Many teachers are making effective use of this data in planning lessons that meet students' needs.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has improved across all subjects. Leaders have set out high expectations of how teachers should work and have brought about a consistent approach to lesson planning that includes making students aware of what they should achieve. Most teachers check students' understanding regularly during lessons and adapt their plans depending on whether the students fully understand their work. Students are increasingly able to judge the quality of their own work, for instance, in religious education where teachers encourage students to use different and interesting ways of reviewing their achievements during lessons. Teachers' marking is generally frequent and helpful, although on some occasions insufficient attention is paid to identifying and addressing weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Students agree that teaching is improving, especially in science, where more lively lessons and better organisation have reduced the incidence of poor behaviour and low achievement.

The best teaching is highly creative and enables students to make rapid progress. This was the case in an outstanding art lesson where the teacher's approach delighted students in its originality. Similarly, in a very effective French lesson, students thoroughly enjoyed high levels of activity that made their learning fun. In a few weaker lessons, pace is too slow, especially where teachers do not do enough to encourage students' independence. Some teachers do not take sufficient account of students' skills in reading and writing. Teaching is improving in both mathematics and English because teachers' strong subject knowledge and better understanding of students' capabilities are leading to better pace and progress in lessons.

There is some variability in the frequency and effectiveness of homework across subjects. Sometimes, students receive little or no homework and on other occasions they feel overloaded and find it difficult to meet deadlines.

The school environment has been enlivened by vibrant displays that celebrate students' work and indicate the increasingly high expectations of teachers and students as to what can be achieved.

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

- increase the amount of good or better teaching so that attainment rises and progress accelerates for all groups of students, especially in English and mathematics – good

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students, teachers and senior leaders state that behaviour has improved in lessons and around the school's large campus. Learning mentors have been appointed and are working effectively with individual students to help them with problems. There has been a reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour. Very few students break the school's rules and the vast majority behave sensibly and courteously. The school has developed an effective system for dealing with disruption to lessons as an alternative to the previous policy of excluding students from lessons. Staff have received effective training to enable them to manage any poor behaviour that occurs. Learning leaders quickly identify underachievement in their year groups and take appropriate action to help students overcome difficulties and make better progress.

The school's new rewards system motivates students well and encourages them to work hard. Most students want to succeed and have positive attitudes in class. They cooperate well with their peers and teachers. The student council has been developed well so that different groups of students have clearly defined remits as the focus for their work. Students' attendance continues to improve and most students arrive punctually to school and to lessons.

The school has done a lot of work to raise students' awareness of the nature and impact of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racism and homophobia. Students take these messages seriously and feel that the school is a safe place to be.

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

- improve the behaviour and safety of students – good

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

The ambitious and purposeful leadership provided by the executive headteacher is increasingly mirrored in the work of the senior team. Their shared commitment to raising achievement is apparent in the consistently high expectations they communicate to staff and students. This has led to strong improvements in teaching, learning and behaviour; staff and students are enjoying success and their high morale is evident throughout the school. The capacity of the school's leaders to drive improvement independently of support has strengthened. Leaders regularly monitor the school's work and their honest, objective evaluations lead to swift adjustments being made. Heads of department, including those who are new to their posts, have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to accelerate students' progress. They feel well supported by the senior team and by the staff who they manage.

Leaders continue to focus on improving teaching. An intensive and rigorous coaching programme has benefited participating staff; they appreciate the quality of the support they have received. Leaders have an accurate view of the relative strengths of individual teachers, as well as their areas for improvement. They are ensuring that the best practice in school is shared, for instance, through scheduling regular opportunities for the heads of English, mathematics and science to work together. Staff say that communication in the school is clear and that they know what is expected of them and to whom they are accountable to. Performance management is being strengthened and explicit links are being made between teachers' success in terms of students' achievement and their level of pay.

The Chair of the Governing Body is a regular visitor to the school and works closely with the executive headteacher. He fully understands the school's work, including the quality of teaching. Individual governors have been linked to subjects in order that the collective governing body has better intelligence regarding all areas of the school's work. The governor who oversees science has detailed knowledge of the scale and impact of plans to improve achievement in that department. Many governors are new to post and have not yet had time to foster links with their assigned subject leaders. The school's head boy and girl have become associate members of the governing body. This has enabled students' feedback on the school's work to be heard regularly.

A full review of the curriculum is underway. There is an appropriate focus across departments on improving students' literacy during lessons. Good-quality guidance is being provided to teachers on how to help students with reading, writing, spelling and speaking. The school is aware that more needs to be done to encourage reading for pleasure. In science, a better range of options is being provided at Key Stage 4 to ensure that all students can gain qualifications.

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

- develop leadership and management at all levels to ensure more rapid and sustainable school improvement – good

### **External support**

The support received from the executive headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body and senior staff of Millom School is of excellent quality and has been instrumental in securing the school's improvement. This is now being scaled down as the school's capacity to improve itself increases. A consultant headteacher is leading the school's curriculum review. The local authority has enabled this support through additional funding and has also financed the appointment of learning mentors. School Improvement Officers continue to review the school's work accurately and have supported staff appointment processes, along with officers from the diocese.