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22 January 2013

Mrs J Meredith  
Headteacher  
St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport  
Glenfield Road  
Heaton Chapel  
Stockport  
Cheshire  
SK4 2QP

Dear Mrs Meredith

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport**

Following my visit to your school on 21 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a consultant headteacher. The school's action plan was evaluated and various documents were scrutinised, including the minutes of Governing Body meetings, and the school's analysis of the most recent progress data and results of mock GCSE examinations in Year 11.

### **Context**

A new subject leader for English took up post at the start of this term. No other changes to staffing or the school's organisation have been made since the inspection.

### **Main findings**

Actions since November have rightly built upon those begun in previous terms, supplemented by additional areas identified by the inspection team. In discussions with HMI, leaders and governors showed a keen appetite and determination to improve the quality of education for all the students. They paid tribute to the way the headteacher has nurtured a

readiness in staff to engage in improving their practice. While the scene has been set, a greater sense of urgency and higher expectations are required in order to secure the pace of sustained improvement necessary to overcome the school's track record of outcomes that are not good enough. The whole-hearted commitment of all staff will be key to this. The agreement to include, for all the teachers, a performance management target of good quality teaching is a positive step.

The action plan contains a range of strategies to tackle each of the priorities identified in the inspection: to raise attainment in English, mathematics and science; to strengthen the quality of teaching; and to improve leadership and management. However, it lacks clarity in how the actions, milestones, success criteria, and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation are interlinked, which makes it difficult to track and report on progress and impact. Occasionally, no action is specified for an intended outcome, such as reducing the gaps between boys' and girls' performance in English and between the achievement of students in receipt of pupil premium funding and their peers; this gap widened in 2012. A timeline and a matrix of professional development activities could aid more effective implementation of the plan.

The newly appointed subject leader for English has brought energy and insight to the role: her action plan shows her clear understanding of important priorities. Capacity in science has been increased through the temporary appointment of a second in department while the school advertises the substantive position. Attainment in mathematics is stronger than in the other two core subjects but some issues relating to the quality of teaching and the progress of higher attainers emerged during the inspection in November. While understood by the subject leader, actions to tackle them are only just beginning, for instance through collaboration with a teaching school. The headteacher has sensibly taken over the line management of English and mathematics.

The school has trained most middle leaders in conducting lesson observations and has developed a new system of quality assurance which helpfully emphasises the value of 'developmental' lesson observations. These need to start as soon as possible as part of a systematic whole-school approach to improving the teaching of all staff through a combination of professional development, challenge and support, and sharing of good practice. Governors, senior and middle leaders need to have an accurate, up-to-date view of the quality of day-to-day teaching in each key stage. The action plan should reflect such an approach. The review of schemes of learning should help to provide a twin focus on what is taught as well as how it is taught.

Governors have played an important part in challenging leaders at all levels. Minutes of meetings of the full Governing Body reflect the challenge provided through questioning and requests for further information. Governors are clear that good teaching is an essential requirement of teachers' future progression up the salary scale. The 'Strategic Group' of governors assessed the action plan, and insisted that an ambitious target of 80% for the proportion of good teaching and regular updates on students' progress be incorporated. The group meets monthly to monitor and evaluate the plan's implementation. While governors were aware of the pupil premium funding received, they were unclear about the impact it was having on students' achievement.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- refine the action plan to bring greater coherence to the actions, success criteria, and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, ensuring all key priorities are tackled, and improve the quality of reporting on the impact of actions
- implement a systematic whole-school approach to developing the quality of teaching
- introduce the new quality assurance system to monitor the quality of provision, and record and act on the findings
- improve governors' knowledge of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school has been proactive in seeking external support to evaluate and develop aspects of its work. The local authority's link adviser and the consultant headteacher worked alongside senior staff to conduct reviews of English and science. Some follow-up developments are underway. A review is also planned for mathematics and, later in the term, on leadership and management at senior and, subsequently, at middle levels. The link adviser and consultant headteacher provided feedback on the action plan, highlighting some weaknesses, but did not follow this through to ensure the plan's coherence. The school has also employed a consultant to provide bespoke training for middle leaders and, through the Diocese of Salford, has made contact with a teaching school with a view to strengthening provision in mathematics. It is too early to see impact from much of this external support.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Stockport, and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.