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10 June 2013

Mrs C Stewardson  
Headteacher  
Cardinal Wiseman Catholic Technology College  
Old Oscott Hill  
Kingstanding  
Birmingham  
B44 9SR

Dear Mrs Stewardson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cardinal Wiseman Catholic Technology College**

Following my visit to your school on 07 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, teachers, the Governing Body, representatives of the local authority, a representative of the Diocese, and the headteacher of the partner outstanding school to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. We conducted a joint learning walk round the school and looked at samples of students' work. I scrutinised minutes of meetings of the governing body, local authority notes of visit, and evaluative reviews of some departments.

#### **Main findings**

Staff have embraced the findings of the recent inspection and are optimistic about the opportunities it has given to develop their teaching. Teachers have paired up with colleagues to complement each other's expertise in literacy, planning and encouraging student talk in lessons. This allows every teacher to observe good

practice, and be observed themselves once a week, as they develop their literacy and planning skills. Teachers are quickly and effectively identifying what aspects of teaching they need to improve. The clear, common coaching lesson observation record provides good development feedback to teachers and requires them to set targets for next week's teaching. This is starting to improve student progress, particularly in their verbal communication skills. However, grading these coaching lessons risks confusion with the more formal teacher performance management judgements and the latter's focus on the impact of teaching over time.

The school action plan is adequate in that it addresses the key Ofsted improvement points. It does not have sufficient, sharp enough student outcome indicators that would confirm the impact of the plan. It also includes additional actions that are not part of the Ofsted improvement list, and therefore risks distracting teachers away from the key issues.

Governing Body minutes since the previous inspection lack summary evaluations or clear records of decisions. The strategic vision of governors is not clear from these notes or from my discussions. For example, the school is planning to recruit six 'Teach First' trainee teachers for September 2013, although the strategic reason to do so is not clear. The appointment of a literacy coordinator, for example, has been proposed for some time, but there is no clear brief for the post. Oversight of literacy is shared between different senior leaders. Fortunately, a recently appointed associate governor brings her considerable expertise in developing school literacy and has made a substantial impact on staff training and advice. The Governing Body has arranged for an independent review of its effectiveness later this month.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle most of the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- complete the planned review of the effectiveness of the governing body and respond quickly to its recommendations.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school is partnered with a nearby outstanding school, whose headteacher is a National Leader in Education. That support is catalysing the improvement work in literacy, lesson planning, and middle leader professional development. Further opportunities, and financial resources, exist to support senior leaders. The partnership school's senior leadership team is conducting a series of evaluative subject reviews. These reviews make succinct and sometimes hard-hitting independent judgements. Those reports would provide powerful evidence to governors on pupil performance, together with the quality of subject provision. The local authority is providing support for you and governors through training events.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**