

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

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 857
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
jkinsman@cfbt.com



27 November 2013

Mr David Hubbard
Headteacher
Corpus Christi Catholic High School
St Vincent's Road
Fulwood
Preston
Lancashire
PR2 8QY

Dear Mr Hubbard

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Corpus Christi Catholic High School

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in April 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Interim Executive Director for Children and Young People at Lancashire County Council and the diocese.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Craven

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2013

- Improve teaching so that it is good or better across all year groups, and particularly in English, and hence raise students' attainment by:
 - ensuring that teachers make instructions clear and precise so students understand what they have to do and lessons proceed purposefully and at a good pace
 - ensuring that staff ask well-planned questions so students are made to think beyond their first answer and explain what they are thinking in more detail
 - ensuring that teachers match activities and tasks to students' abilities so they increase their knowledge and understanding and improve their progress
 - ensuring that all subject teachers mark students' work and make comments at regular intervals and in detail on what students have done well and what they need to work on next, tell students how to gauge their own success and give them the opportunity to assess their own writing and that of others.
- Improve the attendance of those groups with low attendance by increasing the range of actions taken so all students attend well, do not miss lessons and are able to make more progress.
- Further reduce exclusions by regularly checking upon and analysing the exclusions of groups of students and individuals. In addition, plan and implement appropriate intervention actions to avoid further exclusions so that students, particularly boys and those supported by the pupil premium, spend less time away from school.
- Improve further the quality and precision of leaders' monitoring, evaluation and planning in order to further improve students' attainment and progress by ensuring that:
 - accurate evaluation of both improvements and weaknesses leads to the identification of clear, planned actions to improve attainment and progress
 - improvement plans clearly indicate the success expected as a consequence of the actions to be taken, so that leaders can judge how successful they have been and what still remains to be done.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a group of nine students from Years 7 to 11, the Chair of the Governing Body and the senior adviser co-ordinating the support provided by the local authority. The inspector jointly observed two lessons with the deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher respectively and he observed the feedback given to teachers. He scrutinised documents showing the actions the school has taken and their impact. He also checked the school's single central record, which contains checks on staff appointments.

Context

A part-time teacher of science is leaving the school at the end of term with another teacher moving from part- to full-time to fill the gap. A member of staff involved in student support is also leaving at the end of term. 113 students started in Year 7 in September compared to around 170 the previous year. Appropriate checks have been made on staff who started work at the school in September 2013.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher is continuing to drive the school with tenacity. Other senior leaders are fully on board and, with the headteacher, they have formed a cohesive team. The impact of the work of senior leaders and other staff on the behaviour of the students and their attendance is demonstrable. The quality of teaching is also improving. However, students' achievement is lagging behind. This is somewhat understandable given the legacy of underachievement at the school and improvements in the quality of teaching being fairly recent. The systems that needed to be put in place to improve teaching and learning and to give more rigour and consistency to the management of behaviour and attendance are now established.

The school's response to the disappointing rates of students' progress and their attainment in 2013 is well-shaped. It includes personalised revision programmes for students, support of a consultant in developing students' study skills and additional English lessons after school. Students' targets have been raised to provide more challenge and to increase the imperative for achievement.

A team of governors and senior leaders has held progress review meetings with all subject leaders where their self-evaluations of the effectiveness of their departments have been scrutinised. In a number of cases senior leaders have disagreed with the evaluations and have challenged subject leaders to provide evidence to substantiate their assertions. Suitable actions have been set from these meetings. This approach to holding middle leaders to account has been rigorous and gives middle leaders a good model to apply when holding their own staff to account.

Governors have found these meetings helpful and they too have benefited from exposure to this rigorous approach.

The school's use of a commercial company to work with tranches of 10 teachers at a time is proving beneficial. The school's judgements of quality of teaching of the 10 teachers engaged in the first round of training improved from 30% to 80% good. The work of the local authority's teaching and learning consultant is also proving useful. Overall there has been an increase in the quality of teaching of the 11 teachers who have received her support. These are good examples of the school's well-directed professional development and bespoke support. The feedback given to teachers following lesson observations is also playing its part in helping teachers tackle weaknesses in their teaching. The two joint lesson observations showed that senior leaders are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching accurately and can give well-formed, constructive feedback to teachers.

The governing body is rising to the challenge to play a fuller part in holding senior leaders to account for the effectiveness of the work of the school. The majority of governors have been engaged in the progress review meetings with subject leaders. Records of the school's standards and effectiveness committee meetings show that governors are asking searching questions focused on actions taken by senior leaders to make improvements. The examination results in the summer term 2013 were less of a shock to governors than they might have been because of their increasing insights into the school. The shock they got when the school was judged to have serious weaknesses was a wake-up call to which they have responded well. Governors are more aware of the data they are given by the school and they have benefited from the guidance and modelling from the local authority's senior adviser at standards and effectiveness committee meetings.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Although the 2013 results were disappointing overall, it is encouraging that the attainment gaps between those students who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not have reduced. The gap lessened for those gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics from 18.5% to 12.5%. However, the gap in terms of rates of progress between these two groups of students worsened a little in English and stayed broadly the same in mathematics.
- The conduct of the students has improved markedly. Those students who met with the inspector articulated well how behaviour has improved since the headteacher took up post. They cite a very clear, staged approach for staff to deal with misbehaviour and students responding well to this so that little goes beyond the first or second warning stages. The school's data on incidents requiring referral to senior staff support the students' views and show incidents are reducing. The recent use of internal exclusion in response to significant misdemeanours is proving beneficial; the majority of students referred for internal exclusion do not re-offend. Although students' conduct is much improved, their attitudes to learning in lessons are not as strong. They are more compliant and diligent than sparky and buoyant in their learning.

- As a result of a helpful restructuring of the approach to attendance there have been good strides forward. Attendance to date this term shows it has improved by more than 2% compared to the average attendance for last year. Attendance is currently at 94.8%, which is above the last available national average for secondary schools. The proportion of students who fall into the category of persistent absentees dropped by 6% last year. Students confirm that attendance has demonstrably moved up the school's agenda and that the rewards for good attendance are meaningful and make them want to attend. They say the imperative for punctuality is tangible. The school's good analysis of attendance data shows that Year 10 attendance requires the most attention.
- The quality of teaching is improving. Under a third was judged to be good or better in the school's round of 50 lesson observations in the summer term 2013 while the latest round of 52 lesson observations shows close to two thirds is now good or better. The school is unfolding a relentless programme of training and support for teachers. The feedback teachers received following lesson observations is playing its part in helping teachers be clear about what they need to do to improve.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- There has been slow progress in raising students' achievements. However, this is not wholly unexpected given the weaknesses in the quality of teaching at the time of the last inspection. Although the quality of teaching is improving, it is taking some time for it to have a full impact on students' rates of progress.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE was low and a little less than in 2012. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades, not necessarily including English or mathematics, rose by 13%. The numbers of students in Year 11 at the end of summer 2013 making the nationally expected rates of progress in English and mathematics were worryingly low.
- The activities teachers plan tend to be the same for all students. Lesson planning does show how students might receive additional support or challenge when needed. However, this tends to be through guidance materials and the availability of extension work if students manage to finish what they are doing. There is insufficient emphasis on planning work that is precisely matched to the needs of different groups of students in the lesson.

- It is laudable that teachers are trying to enliven lessons by planning activities that get students to collaborate with their peers. However, in some lessons the precise purpose of these collaborative activities is not made clear enough to students and so some are inclined to engage in the activity without knowing exactly what they have to do and, most importantly, what they will learn from the collaboration.

External support

The senior adviser is guiding the local authority's work with the school. She is orchestrating the support of her local authority colleagues effectively. The teaching and learning consultant is having a positive impact. Governors have benefited from their liaison with the senior adviser, not least in their school effectiveness committee meetings. The adviser has a good knowledge of the school and is currently formulating an evaluation report for the local authority's school improvement challenge board. It is this board that checks on the effectiveness of the local authority's support as well as the improvements the school is making. The school has made good use of the executive headteacher from a local teaching school who is a National Leader in Education. Senior staff have benefited from his support and guidance around target setting and the use of data.