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29 November 2013

Mr Stephen Tattersall  
Headteacher  
St Cecilia's Roman Catholic High School  
Chapel Hill  
Longridge  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR3 2XA

Dear Mr Tattersall

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Cecilia's Roman Catholic High School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 28 November 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure all staff follow correct procedures for accurately recording attendance
- set challenging targets for groups of students whose attendance is low in order to raise achievement
- establish a more accurate and detailed picture of the day-to-day quality of teaching
- engage with a National Leader of Governance to bring about improvements in the effectiveness of the Governing Body
- eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that the progress of all groups is monitored robustly.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, students, representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority and

the Salford Diocese to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Four joint lesson observations took place, one with each of the senior leaders. Achievement data were scrutinised alongside the school's self-evaluation of its performance.

## **Context**

There have been no significant contextual changes since the Section 5 inspection.

## **Main findings**

Since the section 5 inspection you have put together a school improvement plan and a calendar of monitoring activities including looking at the quality of students' work in their books, short visits to lessons and listening to students' views about the quality of their learning. The school improvement plan covers all the key areas for improvement. However, you do not state clearly what the expected impact is on students' progress.

Key to the success of the school improvement plan is the effective use of performance management. Effective performance management is hampered because senior leaders have an over-generous view of the quality of teaching in the school and do not focus enough on evaluating the progress made by different groups of students in lessons.

Policies and procedures that relate to attendance need to be urgently reviewed because they are not as effective as they should be. Rates of attendance for students who are eligible for the pupil premium funding remains low and has fallen further since last academic year. Scrutiny of attendance records shows that a student who had been excluded and was not attending the alternative provision arranged for him was marked as being educated off-site. This is inaccurate. School leaders were not fully aware of the correct protocols for recording attendance. The local authority will follow this up with a full review of attendance by a specialist team.

Senior leaders are seeking training to help them evaluate more accurately the quality of teaching. Middle leaders are beginning to evaluate their departments but this is still in its infancy.

Governors do not have a good enough understanding of the extent to which different groups of students make progress in their learning or the impact of the pupil premium in raising achievement. Governors have changed their committee structure to hold senior leaders to account more effectively but this is new so the impact cannot be measured. Governors have established links with some departments and have sat in on lessons to see first-hand what the teaching is like.

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

This visit has raised serious concerns about the school's work. I will report these to the Senior HMI for the region who will consider what action to take and may arrange an inspection of the whole school.

## **External support**

The local authority and the Salford Diocese are working in partnership to address weaknesses in leadership, improve teaching and to raise attainment in mathematics. The Lancashire monitoring and intervention team are also providing support. The headteacher has linked with a National Leader of Education (NLE) and some senior leaders have been to observe practice at the NLE's school. It is too soon to measure the impact of this support.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

**Her Majesty's Inspector**