

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 566862
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
rcowley@cfbt.com



17 January 2014

Mrs Felicity Penny
Headteacher
St Peter's RC Middle School
Northumbrian Road
Cramlington
Northumberland
NE23 6DB

Dear Mrs Penny

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's RC Middle School, Northumberland

Following my visit to your school on 16 January 2014, 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 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors 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 that the review of governance required by the recent section 5 inspection takes place as a matter of urgency and that the school acts promptly and effectively on its findings
- ensure that senior leaders and governors act swiftly to address the issues identified in the recent section 5 inspection
- refine and sharpen the focus of the school improvement plan so that leaders, including governors, can more easily measure the impact of the school's work
- provide updated information to parents and carers about the progress that is being made towards becoming a good school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, pupils, three members of the Governing Body, including the Chair, representatives of the local authority and a member of the leadership team at St Benet Biscop Catholic High School to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Main findings

The review of governance recommended in the recent section 5 inspection has not yet begun. Nor is the governing body's role in and responsibility for the improvement of the school clearly set out in the school's improvement plan. These issues need addressing urgently.

Since the recent section 5 inspection the school's leadership has involved successful partner schools more effectively. A member of the leadership team of St Benet Biscop Catholic High School is now working with the school to improve teaching and learning. This work has taken place alongside more focused approaches to shared lesson planning and classroom observation which now involve more members of staff. This marks a distinct improvement on previous practice and is leading to better lesson preparation. Staff from the school are now visiting other schools within and beyond the partnership to see examples of good and outstanding teaching and learning and to share ideas. This is helping staff at the school focus more carefully on the impact of their teaching.

However, the pace of this valuable partnership working needs to be increased and its focus needs to be sharper. For example, the remit of the leader from the local High School working with the school needs to be set out more carefully so that it is clearly understood across the two schools and is more directly focused on improving the quality of teaching.

The school's improvement plan, whilst taking full account of the findings of the recent section 5 inspection, is not detailed in its description of how the impact of actions taken by the school will be measured. Nor does the plan describe how the 'gap' between those pupils in receipt of free school meals and those who are not will be closed.

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

Her Majesty's Inspector will return to the school as soon as possible to meet with the full Governing Body.

External support

Partnership working with local Catholic schools has not resulted in consistent improvement across the school. This is now improving. More regular links have been recently established with the local authority and a teaching and learning consultant, brokered by the local authority, is now working with the school. The recently formed steering group, involving school leaders, governors and the local authority, has met.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle