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8 May 2014

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

Dear Mr Hubbard

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Corpus Christi Catholic High School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have 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 toward the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

It is recommended that the next inspection be a section 5 full inspection of the school.

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 third monitoring inspection on 7 May 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the headteacher, a group of nine students from Years 7, 9, 10 and 11, the Chair of Governors and the school's adviser from the local authority. Accompanied by the headteacher, he briefly visited five lessons mainly in English. He scrutinised documents and data showing the actions the school has taken and their impact and evidence of how the local authority is supporting and monitoring the school. He also checked the school's single central record, which contains checks on staff appointments.

### **Context**

The school's intake at Year 7 fell to 113 students in 2013. The school's intake of Year 7 pupils in September 2014 is expected to increase to 141. For budgetary reasons six teachers on temporary contracts are leaving the school at the end of this term and one teacher is taking voluntary redundancy. Three other teachers will be leaving the school for other reasons and their positions are being filled. An appointment has been made of a lead practitioner in English from September 2014, and a newly qualified teacher will take up post then as well. Staff appointed to the school since the last monitoring inspection have been appropriately vetted before commencing work.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The rigour the headteacher has injected into management since his arrival a year ago has continued. As a result, the school has become more evaluative. Senior staff are monitoring their areas of responsibility effectively. Middle leaders are not as advanced in their evaluative abilities but are beginning to move forward. Other senior leaders have benefited from the model of rigorously holding others to account demonstrated by the headteacher and their capacity as senior leaders has consequently improved.

Subject leaders and pastoral leaders have action plans and these are regularly reviewed. The headteacher has illustrated his high expectations by having some middle leaders revise their action plans where they have not been sufficiently focused. The action plans have improved but those seen during the monitoring inspection do not have sharp enough measures of success, which make it difficult for middle leaders to be absolutely sure how well their departments are improving. The school's termly reviews of its post Ofsted action plan are showing more emphasis on checking the difference the actions are making not just that they have been completed. Monitoring and evaluating are becoming embedded in the school's practices.

The school's three rounds of formal lesson observations since July 2013 show a steady increase in the amount of teaching judged to be good or better. Currently, senior staff judge about two thirds of teaching to be like this. About 10% is judged outstanding. Both of these figures fall short of the school's milestone targets for where the quality of teaching was expected to be in March 2014. Nevertheless, the number of teachers judged to be teaching lessons that are less than good has halved, reflecting the effectiveness of the support teachers have if their teaching is not good enough. Moving the quality of teaching to good has been less effective in science. Improvements in the quality of teaching in English have been significant reflecting the high level of support it has received.

Teachers are receiving a range of well-considered support to meet their particular needs including opportunities to plan and teach lessons jointly with a teaching and learning consultant. Training sessions have included a focus on effective questioning, how to match work to students' abilities and needs more closely and how to improve the quality of marking and written feedback to students. However, there remain inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking.

Teachers' assessments and mock examination results show that, at the end of March 2014, around half of the Year 11 students were on track to achieve five or more A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics in the summer term examinations. This is close to the school's milestone target for that time. It is a little over twice as many pupils than the assessments in October 2013 reported were on track to gain these GCSE grades. The school predicts that the revision work underway will increase this proportion further.

The proportion of students currently on track to make the expected three National Curriculum levels of progress from the end of Key Stage 2 to the end of Key Stage 4 in English is around 70%, which was broadly the national average for this rate of progress in 2013. It is much improved on the proportions of students who achieved this rate of progress at the school in 2012 and 2013. The rate of progress is not as strong in mathematics but is in advance of the rate achieved last year.

The headteacher is unequivocal in his determination to improve behaviour and has set the bar high as to how the students are expected to behave. The school's data on the number of referrals of students to senior staff because of misdemeanours show that these are decreasing, as there is more consistency from staff in applying the school's behaviour management system. Students report that behaviour has markedly improved.

The information governors are receiving is helpful in giving them an accurate picture of the school. Minutes of the standards and effectiveness committee show clearly that governors are asking questions and probing the written and oral information they receive. Some are complementing this insight into the school by visiting more frequently, including when they attend subject reviews.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The regular meetings senior staff have with the subject leaders they line manage are purposeful and well documented. Some of these have been attended by governors who have benefited from an insight into how middle leaders are being held to account.
- Data are used well to check on students' progress and on their behaviour and attendance. Data are well marshalled to show the picture over time and for different groups of students. This contributes well to the ability of senior and middle leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the school.
- The school has continued to make good inroads into the previously poor rate of attendance. Attendance this academic year to date is 94.3%, which is well ahead of the school's milestone target for March 2014. Indeed, this is in line with the 2013 national average attendance in secondary schools. The rate of persistent absence has reduced to 8% compared to 12% and 16% in 2013 and 2012 respectively. However, it remains above the national average. Data on attendance are analysed well to put the school in a good position to know where the issues lie. They are shared with staff on a weekly basis and staff's increased attention to attendance is reaping rewards. Form tutors' action plans map out the strategies to be used with named students. The school is not afraid to challenge poor attendance and a series of prosecutions for poor attendance have been pursued.
- The school has a comprehensive revision strategy for students in Year 11. This includes subject teachers having action plans, students having revision plans, a study skills day and more practice examinations. Additionally, some students are receiving one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics from two teachers engaged specifically to provide this short-term support. The revision strategy was shared with parents at a meeting at which 92% of Year 11 students' parents attended.
- The views of the students who met with the inspector are largely positive about the direction of the school. They can see that changes have made a positive difference to behaviour and attendance and to some aspects of teaching.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Overall, the quality of teachers' marking has improved over time as shown by the school's analyses of students' books. There are some splendid examples of marking that helps students improve their work. Nevertheless, marking remains inconsistent. There are too many examples of teachers not following up on students' responses to the written action points they give them. There are some occasions when misspellings are pointed out to students but they

fail to correct them. There are also too many opportunities missed to stress how students should improve the quality of their presentation and handwriting.

- Although there are indications that teachers still teaching lessons that require improvement are slowly improving, there is a danger that they will linger in this category too long. More stringent measures of support and challenge may be required and the headteacher is assessing this.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusion remains high. The headteacher recognises the need to ensure preventative measures are prominent, including the use of internal exclusion, before a fixed-term exclusion is used. He and other senior leaders are, nevertheless, confident that the need for fixed-term exclusion will decrease as students increasingly recognise that the school's rules are indisputable.

### **External support**

In its statement of action the local authority planned to reduce the intensity of support it provides for the school as the school itself increasingly began to drive its own improvement forward. The local authority was right to do this as the school is standing more firmly on its own. It continues to monitor the school's progress through the work of its advisers in checking on the school's work and through its representation on the standards and effectiveness committee alongside governors, where leaders of the improvement strands in the school's action plan are questioned about the progress being made. The local authority, consequently, has an accurate view of the school. The teaching and learning consultant from the local authority and the commercial company working with individuals and groups of teachers are continuing to provide effective support.