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Mrs H Knight
Headteacher
Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College
Potters Green Road
Coventry
CV2 2AJ

Dear Mrs Knight

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College

Following my visit to your school on 9 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a consultant adviser from a local Teaching School partner. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated. Brief visits to four lessons took place.

Context

There have been no substantial changes to key staff, or to the governing body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Immediately following the inspection, the local authority approached a local Teaching School, resulting in the deployment of a leadership consultant to this school. He has introduced an evidence-based review of teaching and learning to 'benchmark' current practice. The review identified common shortfalls in teaching. School leaders have also assessed 'low level disruption' using Ofsted guidance. Their monitoring of instances where students lose focus and stop themselves, or others, from learning shows that the frequency of these events is reducing. Additionally, the headteacher and a governor are working with a good school in a similar context that has recently recovered from a category of concern. These visits highlighted the benefit of using student performance data to help staff focus on raising achievement. A commercial software product to be used by teachers and managers now allows straightforward monitoring of students' progress.

The original inspection and first report draft made no mention of a requirement to conduct an external review of governance. As this request only appeared in the report in February, the review has not yet taken place. Senior leaders, governors and the local authority are acutely aware that the school's overall effectiveness has declined sharply over three years. All have taken responsibility for this and are committed to redressing the decline. They are commissioning good support from a range of external partners, including leadership training from the Teaching School Alliance.

The action plans have sufficient performance measures in place to allow the monitoring of progress towards removal of serious weaknesses. The plans would benefit from the inclusion of figures to help governors measure the extent of remaining gaps between current performance and the expected (national) targets, which must be considered as an absolute minimum. The short, term-by-term approach to school action plans does allow systematic focus on urgent common concerns.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Coventry, and the Diocesan Board of Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright

Her Majesty's Inspector