

## PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Mrs Linda Mousdale  
Headteacher  
St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School  
Boardmans Lane  
Blackbrook  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA11 9BB

Dear Mrs Mousdale

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Augustine of Canterbury Catholic High School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in October 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 and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for St. Helens.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013:**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good in order to raise standards across all subjects, in mathematics and particularly in English, so that all groups of students make at least good progress that is sustained over time, by:
  - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment data when planning activities to enable all groups of students to learn more quickly
  - ensuring that learning activities are imaginative and relevant and are designed in a way that deepens students' understanding of the subject being taught
  - providing further opportunities for students to talk about and consolidate their learning in class
  - ensuring that teachers' marking of students' work consistently provides students with clear and specific guidance on what they need to do to improve and that teachers' written comments are always followed up by students.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - sharing more widely the good and outstanding practice that currently exists in the school
  - ensuring that the school's systems to track and monitor students' progress are used well to evaluate the achievement of all groups of students and to ensure they achieve equally well.

**Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 May 2014****Evidence**

I met with you and with senior and middle leaders responsible for a range of aspects of the school's work. A meeting was held with the Chair and other members of the governing body and a telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority who has been working with you to support the school's improvement. I considered documentation that you provided concerning records of your monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the most up-to-date information on students' attainment and progress. I observed teaching in English and in mathematics at both key stages and made brief visits to lessons in science, information and communication technology/business studies and history. I scrutinised a small sample of students' written work as well as their work in the classrooms I visited during the inspection. Students' views about the school were also gathered during these visits. The single central record was checked and found to meet requirements in terms of one teacher and two learning support assistants appointed since my previous visit.

**Context**

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the first monitoring visit.

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

There are signs that the school has moved forward significantly since my first monitoring visit in February 2014. Staff attribute this improvement to the very clear and ambitious direction and very positive ethos that you and senior leaders have established with great determination across the school. This is a shared vision to which governors and leaders at all levels are highly committed. Middle leadership has been strengthened considerably through your own personal commitment to their high-quality training. Middle leaders appreciate the clarity of their roles and responsibilities and the fact that senior leaders provide them with support and challenge in equal measure. It is clear that you listen carefully to and support their ideas for the further improvement of their teams and outcomes for students.

You are achieving well and in timely fashion against your 'Post-Ofsted Plan' and against the local authority's statement of action. You have set in place very strong systems for the school's improvement and these are beginning to bear fruit. You and the governors use the school's performance-management systems very effectively to ensure that teaching continues to improve. Teachers now have many opportunities to share the good practice that exists within the school, with the result that your records show that most teaching is good, with a small amount that is outstanding and a very small amount that still requires improvement. This mirrors the small amount of students' learning that I saw during the inspection. The improvement in marking and written feedback to students, seen on my previous visit, is much more

consistently in place across the school and is leading to some high-quality dialogue between teachers and students about their learning. You are aware that more outstanding teaching is needed to inspire and meet the needs of the most able and a small number of the most vulnerable students in the school.

The school's tireless and innovative work in improving students' attendance from a low base has resulted in rates of absence, including persistent absence, that are now better than the national average. Students whom I met during my visit spoke positively about the school. They take pride in the school and in their own appearance and are articulate and thoughtful young people who interact readily with each other and with visiting adults.

The good-quality training of all staff in the sharper use of information about students' progress, together with more rigorous moderation within departments, and externally, is ensuring more accurate assessment and earlier identification of individual students and groups who are not achieving as well as they could. The regular 'RAP' or 'Raising Achievement' meetings, now routinely attended by governors, ensure that teaching staff are rigorously held to account for the outcomes of their students and that support is quickly put in place in the event of any underperformance.

This improved tracking of students' progress indicates that outcomes for students in the GCSE examinations of summer 2014 are likely to show improvement on the 2013 results in most main measures of attainment and progress. The five A\* to C measure including English and mathematics is set to be close to the national average, as is expected progress in mathematics. Expected progress in English is predicted to exceed the national average.

Most attainment gaps are closing and the performance of key groups is improving. Students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) make better progress in English than this group of students nationally and make similar progress to the group nationally in mathematics. Students who have a disability or special educational needs make similar progress in English and mathematics to this group nationally. You realise that there is more work to be done to improve boys' writing and to increase the proportions of students, especially the most able and a small number of those who have a disability or special educational needs, who exceed expected progress.

Governors give strong support to the leadership and management of the school and they have taken the initiative in improving their own practice further. They are therefore more knowledgeable about the progress of different groups of students in the school and can account well for the expenditure of the pupil premium funding and its impact on the outcomes for this group. They understand what needs to be done to improve the school further and inspection evidence shows that governors are determinedly playing their part in challenging the school to do so.

The school has made progress on all the recommendations for improvement from the inspection of October 2013. You are aware that, as teaching grows consistently stronger, there will need to be a real focus on increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching that inspires the most and least able students to achieve as well as they can.

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

- The concerted energy and commitment of senior leaders in improving the school.
- The clear vision, shared by all staff, focused firmly on improving outcomes for all students.
- The high expectations from senior leaders and the strong systems put in place to support and challenge both staff and students to achieve as well as they can.

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

- There are no significant weaknesses in the school's approach to securing further improvement.

**External support**

The local authority's ongoing support continues to contribute effectively to the school's improvement. There is clear impact on departmental leadership and outcomes of students in English from the consultancies that the local authority has organised.