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9 September 2014

Mrs Jane Beever
Executive Headteacher
St Antony's Catholic College
Bradfield Road
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Dear Mrs Beever

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Antony's Catholic College

Following my visit to your school on 8 September 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 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 July 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's Services for Trafford.

Yours sincerely

Susan Barkway
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2013

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good in all subjects and all year groups, in order that students make consistently good progress and attain GCSE results that are at least in line with national expectations by:
 - eradicating the small minority of inadequate teaching that remains
 - using high quality assessment information to plan lessons that provide appropriate activities for students of all abilities, including the most- and least-able
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and provide them with work that is exciting so that students' attitudes to learning are always good
 - providing more opportunities for students to be able to work independently and in groups, to question each other and their teacher in order to improve their own understanding
 - ensuring that students do not repeat work that they can already do and understand so that they have more opportunities to be challenged further and so that important learning points are not missed
 - ensuring that the marking of students' work is regular, of high quality, and gives students insightful and challenging feedback, and that they are expected to respond to this feedback
 - ensuring that there is a consistently strong focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects
 - ensuring that staff learn from the best practice in the college and in other schools.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management, including governance by ensuring that:
 - systems to check and improve the quality of teaching and students' progress are consistently applied by all senior and middle leaders and teachers
 - sharp and achievable timescales and targets for improving teaching and students' achievement are identified on school improvement plans and that progress towards achieving them is checked regularly
 - members of the governing body have the skills to ask searching questions when holding leaders to account for the college's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 September 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the senior leadership team, members of the governing body, a representative from the Catholic Diocese of Salford and two representatives from Trafford local authority. She carried out a learning walk during which she observed aspects of teaching and behaviour, talked to students about their learning and looked at a small sample of students' work in books. In addition, the inspector scrutinised school documentation, including information on students' attainment and progress, and the single central record of safeguarding checks made on staff.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in November 2013, the headteacher has left to take up a headteacher appointment at another school. The governors have appointed an executive headteacher and associate headteacher from a successful teaching school to lead and manage the school. Both took up their posts in January 2014 and will continue in these roles until September 2015, when it is expected that a permanent headteacher will be appointed. There have been no other significant changes.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The restructured senior leadership team is providing strong direction and focus for the work of the school. They are a cohesive team and all are clear about their individual roles and responsibilities. As a result, good progress has been made with actions to secure improvement and there is convincing evidence of the impact of leaders and managers on some aspects of the school's work. For example, there has been a significant improvement in student attendance and the proportion of days lost to exclusion has reduced dramatically. In addition, following the implementation of revised procedures for managing staff absence, the number of days that staff took off because of illness decreased significantly in the 2013 to 2014 academic year. As a result, there is less disruption to students' learning and greater consistency in approaches to teaching and behaviour management.

The governing body has acted on many of the recommendations from the external review of governance. They have taken part in training sessions and have a much clearer understanding of the expectations of their work as governors. They say that meetings are focused and better organised so that more governors contribute to and are involved in the work of the school. They are developing their knowledge of students' progress and understand how this can help them to provide robust challenge and support. However, they now need to ensure that they focus on the

impact of interventions on student progress, particularly for disadvantaged students, so that they are in a better position to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Rigorous procedures for the moderation of students' work have resulted in more accurate assessments of students' achievements. As a result, measures of student progress and predictions for future achievements are based on reliable data.
- A new marking policy is helping to improve the quality of feedback on students' work. Books are marked regularly and students understand what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Teachers receive information, including assessment data, about groups of students in their class and they are using this to set work which challenges and supports all students effectively.
- There is greater focus on the development of literacy across all subjects. For example, marking identifies errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and students have a literacy mat in all lessons to support their writing. In addition, there are more opportunities for students to read for both research and enjoyment.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning have been implemented. These provide regular opportunities to draw on a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning and are supported by fortnightly line-management sessions which are used to provide feedback and identify targets for further development.
- Professional development has been planned and tailored to meet the needs of individuals and groups of teachers. This draws on the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities and is providing effective support to all members of staff. In this approach, senior leaders are drawing well on best practice in the school, as well as in other schools. As a result, there is evidence of improvements to the quality of teaching.
- Classrooms are calm and orderly. Displays are well presented and it is a pleasant and supportive environment in which students can work. Behaviour is managed well and students are respectful of each other and adults.
- The school has asked students for their views about aspects of the school's performance. The outcomes show that students are far more positive about all areas, including the quality of teaching and the support they receive.
- Students now receive regular homework which they are expected to complete. As a result, there are more opportunities to extend and consolidate their learning.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- GCSE results in 2014 show little improvement from 2013 and there is, as yet, limited evidence of the impact of interventions on students' achievements.

The school will need to ensure that tracking data is robust and analysed so that interventions are effectively targeted to need and all students make at least expected progress.

- As yet, the gap between the achievements of disadvantaged students and other students in the school is not narrowing. The school needs to rigorously measure the impact of interventions to ensure that this extra funding is used effectively to accelerate the progress of this group of students.
- The school does not use the range of information that it has, for example from work scrutiny and student progress data, to provide robust evidence and evaluation of the quality of teaching over time.
- Governors have not developed strategies for communication with parents. As a result, there are limited opportunities for them to explain actions taken by the school or to take account of parent views when planning further developments.

External support

The local authority and diocese provide good support to the school. They have worked together to broker support, for example from Loreto Grammar School, and a member of the local authority advisory service has worked very closely with the school, particularly on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The local authority has worked to develop a five-year plan to reduce the school's budget deficit, which means that reductions can be planned and managed so that the quality of education is not compromised. Representatives from the diocese and local authority meet regularly with a core group of governors, and members of the senior leadership team to monitor and evaluate the progress made against the school improvement plan.