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Mr Paul Trickett
Acting headteacher
St Cecilia's RC High School
Chapel Hill
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PR3 2XA

Dear Mr Trickett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Cecilia's RC High School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 24 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 second 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- strengthen the leadership and management of special educational needs provision
- ensure that all verbal and written feedback tells students precisely how to improve
- check that students consistently act on the feedback they are given to improve their work.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, senior leaders and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the

last inspection. I made a number of short visits to lessons, scrutinised students' work and spoke to students before school and at lunch-time.

Context

A number of staff including the headteacher have left the school since the previous monitoring visit. An executive headteacher and his deputies have worked closely with senior leaders until the end of the summer term. An acting headteacher has now been seconded from a good school within the local authority.

Main findings

Governors have responded quickly and robustly to the issues raised at the previous monitoring visit. They have made it their business to bring about tangible improvements for all groups of students, in particular those who are eligible for the pupil premium. Governors have a better understanding of achievement data, they ask more pressing questions of senior leaders and have created a new ethos of equal support and challenge in partnership with the executive headteacher.

Governors have organised themselves according to their strengths. They are now led by a Chair of Governors with extensive educational expertise. Many governors, particularly parent governors, have shown immense compassion and commitment to improving the school by listening directly to students views and taking action accordingly.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning have been strengthened. A number of staff have been given support for where their teaching has been deemed not good enough. Some of these staff have improved and some have left the school. Performance management is much more closely related to students' achievement rather than just observations of teaching.

There are some good examples of marking and assessment, for example in mathematics homework books and art folders. In these subjects students regularly improve their work in response to the teacher's feedback resulting in better progress.

The monitoring, assessment and support for students who are disabled or have special educational needs is not as robust as it should be. This is a barrier to these students making better progress.

GCSE results this year show an improvement in the proportion of students achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Progress in English remains strong and mathematics is improving. Targets are set consistently and reflect the higher aspirations of leaders at all levels.

Year 7 students were observed making good progress in French due to careful planning and high quality support for literacy. Similarly Year 8 history students benefitted from the teacher's expert subject knowledge and could explain in detail the dissolution of the monasteries.

Students are highly positive about the revised behaviour system and the number of fixed-term exclusions compared with last year has more than halved.

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

External support

The way that the governors, local authority and diocese have collaborated to bring about swift improvements is exemplary. A plethora of support has been provided from a teaching school within the diocese and from a good school also within the diocese. The impact of this support can be seen in the strengthened leadership capacity and clear improvements in the quality of teaching. Governors and senior leaders are overwhelmingly positive about the support they have received.

The local authority has undertaken a thorough review of attendance to ensure that all absence is recorded correctly.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector