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16 January 2015

Ms K McNicholas
Headteacher
Leyland St Mary's Catholic High School
Royal Avenue
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 1BS

Dear Ms McNicholas

Special measures monitoring inspection of Leyland St Mary's Catholic High School

Following my visit to your school on 15 January 2015, 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive headteacher, the nominated Chair of the Governing Body, members of the senior leadership team, the local authority representative and the archdiocesan schools' officer.

Context

An executive headteacher is now in post. The support provided by an associate headteacher for the last term has now been withdrawn. Two members of teaching staff have left the school since the last inspection, and as such, arrangements for internal acting-up posts have been put in place. An associate deputy headteacher is providing two days per week support with regard to behaviour and the achievement of disadvantaged students. A new school business manager has been appointed.

The trusteeship of the school has transferred from the Benedictine Order to the Liverpool Archdiocese. The governing body has been reconstituted with the appointment of seven new foundation governors who have a wide range of skills which will be beneficial to the future of the school. The nominated Chair of the Governing Body is a National Leader of Governance.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The senior leadership team, local authority and archdiocese recognise and understand why the school was judged to require special measures.

The new governing body has a diverse and appropriate skills set which will enable its members to challenge and hold leaders to account with regard to future performance.

The headteacher has worked hard to develop positive relationships with a range of outside support agencies to move the school forward.

An executive headteacher has been in post for nine days. He brings a wealth of experience and has quickly understood the improvement needs of the school. Among several initiatives now underway, his guidance on adjustments to meeting schedules and their function is ensuring that time is spent effectively and wisely to move the school in the right direction.

The senior leadership team demonstrates potential. Senior leaders are resolute in moving the school out of special measures. They are eager to improve their own practice by accessing both coaching and training opportunities.

Work has started to improve the profile of teaching and learning, but the performance across the school remains mixed and much work needs to be done to create a 'buzz' about learning across the school. Training is now in place to raise standards and expectations. However, this training needs to be balanced with holding underperforming staff to account. The impact of the cross-curricular literacy programme needs to be closely monitored.

The headteacher is working hard to ensure that staffing absences are addressed. This work will be further enhanced by the support of the recently appointed business manager.

The school's positive ethos is apparent and a range of practices has been put in place to support all young people.

Behaviour is orderly around the school: children report that they feel safe and their parents agree that they are kept safe in school. A rewards system has been launched this term, which looks promising. Frequent monitoring will enable its impact to be measured.

The re-establishment of the school site in temporary accommodation, although well maintained, makes movement between lessons more difficult. However, it is important that punctuality between lessons becomes a key focus for all staff and that a universal approach to prompt starts for lessons is adopted, alongside maximising the learning time for all pupils by ensuring that all lessons last for the allocated time.

The data being used by the school are now far more robust, realistic and understandable to almost all of the staff and students. Intervention strategies are being put in place for students who are not achieving target grades. The school is eager to promote in-class support for individual students alongside out-of-class intervention. The senior leadership team recognises the need to emphasise and review the frequency of feedback on progress.

Efforts to improve communication, according to parent and student feedback, are improving rapidly. The introduction of daily briefings for staff will ensure that all key messages are shared in a timely and efficient manner. Independent health checks have been commissioned for all core departments. Once received, it is important that action plans are developed and reports are acted upon swiftly.

The 'mock results' event held this term has been appreciated by students who received results in envelopes and then went on to be interviewed by representatives from three local further education establishments who commented on the positive and mature approach of the students and the recognition of many students of the need to work harder in order to gain results which will enable access to desired courses.

Super Learning Days have been reviewed across all five year groups to ensure that students are prepared for life in modern Britain, as well as enhancing knowledge of how to stay safe, prevent bullying and be healthy.

The school website has been relaunched and is now compliant with the Department for Education regulations.

A curriculum review is currently being undertaken and leaders are mindful of the need to ensure that all programmes of study enable students to demonstrate maximum achievement.

An independent external review has been carried out into the performance of disadvantaged students. This has highlighted a range of findings which now need to be

explored and developed into an action plan to ensure improved outcomes for these young people.

The local authority is to be commended on its support and challenge which it has given to the school. Representatives have attended monthly progress meetings and have been pivotal in brokering high quality support from a range of providers, including three local high schools.

Following the inspection, the following judgements were made:

- The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures
- The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose
- The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anne Pontifex

Associate Inspector

Appointed as an Associate Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.