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Mrs Joanne Meredith
Headteacher
St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport
Glenfield Road
Heaton Chapel
Stockport
Cheshire
SK42QP

Dear Mrs Meredith

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport

Following my visit to your school on 21 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. I would also like to thank the three students who accompanied me on a short tour of the school.

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 the headteacher and senior leaders, a supporting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

A National Leader of Education (NLE) has been commissioned to provide support to the school.

Since the last inspection three teachers of English, one teacher of science, one cover supervisor, the media manager and the network manager have left the school. One teaching assistant has taken up a post of qualified English teacher in the school. The head of English has returned prematurely from maternity leave.

One governor has resigned. A mathematics teacher, an English teacher, a cover supervisor and a receptionist have joined the school's list of supply staff.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Rapid, appropriate actions are being taken to move the school forward. There is an obvious determination among the staff and other members of the school community to take the school out of special measures. The headteacher, supported by an NLE from another faith school and a headteacher from the NLE's Teaching School Alliance, has led the school in responding positively to the findings of the inspection. Despite the school community's initial shock and disappointment at the findings, the vast majority were quick to recognise and embrace the need for change. The governing body realised that swift action must be taken and they took immediate advice from the diocese and local authority. There was a very positive meeting of senior school leaders, governors, local authority and diocese representatives at which there was a general acceptance of the findings of the inspection and a desire to address the issues urgently. This meeting established a Core Strategic Group prior to the publication of the final inspection report.

A former Chair of the Governing Body of the school became Chair of the Core Group with a responsibility to drive forward improvement. The group has very specific responsibilities and has the delegated authority to make decisions without reference to the full governing body. Minutes of meetings of the group show a determination to ensure a coherent approach in supporting and challenging the school by increasing leadership capacity and establishing a robust response to the issues raised.

In the action plans there is a lack of clarity as to who will be monitoring the progress of the school and who will be evaluating it.

I recommend that action plans are revisited and revised to ensure that it is clear who will carry out monitoring and who will carry out evaluation and that there is a distinct separation of these responsibilities.

Senior managers are keen to manage change rapidly but carefully. Following the publication of the inspection report there was an initial dip in staff morale. However, the headteacher shared the evidence in detail and now the vast majority embrace

the need for change. There is a clear message that all staff are responsible for raising achievement and improving the students' progress.

Comprehensive reviews of the areas identified in the report have been commissioned and are in progress. Specifically these are into:

- the effectiveness of the work of the English and mathematics departments;
- the quality of teaching and learning, particularly with regard to numeracy and literacy, following a forensic look at current information on students' progress;
- the effectiveness of middle leaders in improving students' attainment and progress;
- the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding (additional government money) to promote students' progress;
- assessment, marking and feedback and the use of management information systems to enable progress to be more easily measured;
- behaviour management;
- effective ways of disseminating the good practice which exists in the school;
- the suitability of the curriculum in meeting the needs of learners in the school.

The response of parents to the findings of the inspection report was mixed. A group of parents who attended meetings scheduled by the school to discuss the outcomes with them were largely positive. However, this is not reflected in responses made to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which are highly critical. Immediate action by the school to re-engage with the community that it serves and restore parental confidence is urgently needed.

Governors have adopted a very self-critical response to the inspection findings and were in the process of commissioning a review of governance when the inspection was scheduled. A review by a National Leader of Governance has been initiated and the outcomes will inform the governing body's imminent reconstitution and will establish an understanding of what information the governing body needs to ask the necessary questions to drive improvement.

The local authority and diocese agreed that neither wanted to convert the school to an academy nor explore federation at this stage. They are not insisting on an Interim Executive Board because they believe that the core group and robust plans of the senior leaders, supported by commissioned leaders directly accountable to the governing body, will improve governance and make it more effective.

The governing body is very positive about the speed of response of the local authority and the diocese and the quality of the support commissioned by them. The support model used is one which has previously been employed effectively within the diocese, in similar circumstances. For some time the governing body has been

asking for evidence of the quality of teaching in the school and welcomes the emphasis on improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in the support being planned. Good working relationships have been established between all those engaged in the improvement process.

The intention is that the diocese, local authority, school leaders and governing body agree a single integrated improvement plan when the initial review findings are available.

All key issues identified in the inspection as requiring improvement, are included in the existing interim plans and they have been properly prioritised giving highest priority to those actions which will have the most effective impact on student outcomes. There is recognition by the school that the action plan needs clear and specific targets which will result from reviews presently taking place and the quality assurance process. These targets will be developed progressively starting with Year 11 before February half term and made available to the core group for evaluation. Assessment points for all year groups are now fixed in the school calendar with a clear structure. Monitoring and verification of the assessment outcomes against targets should be carried out by senior leaders supported by the commissioned consultant with evaluation undertaken by the governing body.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not yet fit for purpose.

This is because it was prepared as an interim statement prior to the current externally supported assessment of the detailed requirements for improvements. It will be amended in the light of the outcomes of these assessments.

The school's improvement plan is not yet fit for purpose.

This is because the plan does not contain success criteria that are linked to precise outcomes for students at specific times. These are the milestones and indicators which would allow senior leaders and governors to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken and determine whether they were cost effective and gave value for money.

It is recommended that targets need to be set for English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education for each year group. These must be precise, based on quantifiable evidence and linked to students' attainment and progress, or other outcomes such as rates of attendance and behaviour where relevant. They should include targets for closing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and their peers.

The local authority and diocese are not insisting on an Interim Executive Board because they believe that the reconstitution and robust plans of the governing body will improve governance and make it more effective.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The school should submit a revised plan by the end of February 2015.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Corporate Director, Services to People for Stockport and the Director of Education for Salford Diocese. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Denis Oliver

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.