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2 February 2015

Mrs Jane Beever
Executive Headteacher
St Antony's Catholic College
Bradfield Road
Urmston
Manchester
M41 9PD

Dear Mrs Beever

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Antony's Catholic College

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third 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, the Corporate Director Children, Families and Well-Being for Trafford and Salford Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Sue 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 the 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 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 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 there is a consistently strong focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects
 - ensuring 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 third monitoring inspection on 30 January 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the senior leadership team, members of the governing body, a representative from the Catholic Diocese of Salford and representatives from Trafford local authority. She also carried out a series of short visits to lessons during which she observed aspects of teaching and behaviour in English and mathematics, 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, the self-evaluation summary and the school's central record of safeguarding checks made on staff.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in September 2014, there have been no new appointments. However, the school has continued to implement a programme of redundancies which was necessary because of falling rolls over recent years. As a result, some teachers have left the school or are due to leave in the near future. However, a new head of geography has been appointed and will take up the post at the beginning of the summer term.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The executive headteacher and associate headteacher are providing very strong leadership and ensuring that actions are taken to ensure rapid improvements to the quality of education at the school. They are supported extremely well by the senior leadership team. Together, they have communicated their vision for the school and have successfully raised expectations so that teaching staff and students have higher aspirations about what can be achieved. Senior leaders have implemented rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and regular reviews of data enable them to keep a careful track on the progress made by students. Although GCSE outcomes in 2014 remain significantly below national averages, scrutiny of current data indicates that progress is accelerating and there are rapid improvements being made to standards of achievement. Predictions for 2015 five A* to C are based on internal assessments, corroborated by external moderation, and indicate a significant increase on previous years. Similarly, progress data for other year groups indicate a rapidly improving trend. These improvements are a result of higher expectations and an increasing proportion of consistently good or better teaching.

Governors are making a good contribution to school improvement. They have established a rapid improvement board which meets on a monthly basis to look in detail at progress against the improvement plan. In this way, they have developed an accurate understanding of students' progress and are now providing robust challenge. They have been proactive in securing external support for the school and are working closely with the school, local authority and diocese to ensure that

support is appropriate and of high quality. Since the last monitoring inspection, governors have considered and implemented a range of strategies for communication with parents. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body now sends a termly newsletter to parents to report on progress against the school improvement plan and to suggest ways in which parents can support the school. Governors are also available to meet with parents at all school functions. As a result, there are opportunities for them to explain actions taken by the school and to take account of parent views when planning further developments.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Reductions in school staffing have been managed very well so that the quality of education has not been compromised and morale has not dipped.
- Data on students' progress are clear and enable early identification of any issues or concerns. The data are shared regularly with heads of department and heads of year who are held accountable for students' achievement and the quality of teaching in their area of responsibility.
- Intervention programmes are well targeted to the needs of students and carefully monitored to ensure that they are resulting in accelerated progress. For example, the progress of students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding (additional government money) is improving because of the support they receive and the gap in achievement with other students in the school is narrowing.
- The tutoring programme, which provides one-to-one or small-group support, particularly in reading and writing, has increased significantly the literacy skills of the students involved.
- The quality of teaching is improving because of an effective programme of support and professional development which is based on the needs of individual teachers.
- Heads of department work closely with teachers from other schools. This is enabling the sharing of good and outstanding practice, supporting the moderation of students' work and raising expectations. It has also been a factor in the improving morale evident in the school.
- The school uses a range of evidence, for example, from work scrutiny and students' progress data, to provide evidence and evaluation of the quality of teaching over time. Teachers now have a much deeper awareness of the link between pupil achievement, the standard of work in books and judgements about the quality of teaching.
- Performance management procedures are robust and decisions about pay are closely linked to students' performance and the quality of teaching.
- Behaviour has continued to improve because of consistent approaches to behaviour management and raised expectations. Rigorous monitoring is used to track behavioural incidents and to ensure actions to improve behaviour are effective. As a result, there has been a very significant decrease in the number of days lost to fixed-term exclusions, as well as the proportion of students who are excluded.

- Views of parents and students are regularly sought. Comments are analysed to check that there is an increasingly positive view of the work of the school and to identify any areas that could be improved further. For example, following the implementation of revised procedures for managing behaviour, students were asked for their thoughts on the strategy. The school responded by amending the approach and informing students through, 'You said, we did.'
- Safeguarding requirements are met. The central record of safeguarding checks made on staff is up to date and members of staff and governors receive training to ensure that they understand safeguarding procedures.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- There remain inconsistencies in the quality of marking of students' work. Where it is effective, students know what they have achieved and understand what they need to do to improve their work further. However, at times marking lacks detail and there is no identification of what students need to do to secure or move to the next level. In some books, teachers do too many corrections and do not give students the opportunity to improve their work themselves.
- Presentation is not consistently of a high standard and there is occasional graffiti in books.

External support

The local authority and diocese continue to provide good support to the school. They have worked together to broker support, particularly from Loreto Grammar School and their teaching school alliance. For example, the executive and associate headteachers are the substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher at Loreto and the teaching school alliance provides substantial support for teaching and learning. 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.