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Mrs H Knight
Headteacher
Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College
Potters Green Road
Coventry
CV2 2AJ

Dear Mrs Knight

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and Language College

Following my visit to your school on 17 March 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 December 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 Director of Children's Services for Coventry, and the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham Board of Education.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement, particularly for the more able, for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, and in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons that include activities that match the full ability range of students
 - ensure that each student is aware of the challenges set for them
 - helping students develop their skills in learning independently
 - ensuring teachers assess students' understanding in lessons more effectively so that they know whether they should adapt their lessons and which students need more help.
- Tackle low-level disruption in order to improve progress for all students.
- Ensure that the school's leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and are rigorous in comparing the school's performance to national figures.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 March 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior staff, the director of school improvement for Coventry local authority, and the Vice-Chair of Governors and Chair of the performance sub-committee. The inspector visited ten lessons (alongside a deputy headteacher for six lessons). The visits looked in particular at how well teachers plan and subsequently adapt activities to match the abilities and developing understanding of students. The inspector looked at recent external reviews, school improvement plans, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Context

Approval has been granted for the school to become an academy as part of a local Multi Academy Company sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. That is planned for July 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The information gathered by school managers on students' progress across all years is detailed enough for governors to ask searching questions of school leaders. That data shows that students are making at least reasonable progress from their different starting points in most years and subjects. However, there are still substantial, albeit narrowing, gaps between disadvantaged students and other students in the current Year 11 that vary between different subjects. The gap is most apparent in mathematics. Fortunately, good analysis by mathematics subject leaders and external consultants has identified in detail where these students are underachieving. This is allowing bespoke learning plans for these students designed to remedy the legacy of weak teaching of some elements of mathematics in the past. In English for Year 11, the gap is much lower. The school is predicting a broadly average set of GCSE results in 2015, which would represent good progress for most students.

In the majority of lessons, teachers ensure activities are well matched to students' prior learning and abilities. Students can make choices about the degree of challenge, allowing them to efficiently work at the edge of their talents; they enjoy this responsibility. The content of these lessons captures students' hearts as well as minds, and that triggers their curiosity, which leads them to a deeper understanding of the issues involved.

The quality of science teaching is inconsistent; school leaders and governors are aware of this and have recently commissioned an external review of science. The review has highlighted the factors involved. Changes to the Key Stage 4 science curriculum will ensure most students sit at least two science GCSEs, although the recent mock examinations showed the need for some urgent revision work to ensure

that students make the progress they should in science. There has been considerable staff turnover in science. The inspector noted wide variation of standards of students' written work. Some is of high quality, frequently involving students' own explanations of a science idea. However, some work is jumbled, incomplete, poorly marked and shows limited independent thinking on the part of students, because of the amount of copied text.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teaching, and the progress of students of all groups, continues to improve overall, thanks to effective ongoing professional development for teachers and managers.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Improvements in science are lagging behind those in other core subjects.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide effective support for senior and middle leaders, either directly or through commissioning independent consultants. The local authority has helped with the steps the school and archdiocese are taking towards becoming an academy. The training of governors has been effective in securing their independence, so that they are now equipped to hold the school to account.