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30 April 2015

Mrs Joanne Meredith
Headteacher
St Anne's Roman Catholic High School, Stockport
Glenfield Road
Heaton Chapel
Stockport
Cheshire
SK4 2QP

Dear Mrs Meredith

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

Following my visit to your school with Janet Pruchniewicz, Additional Inspector, on 28 and 29 April 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school action plan and local authority statement of action are now fit for purpose.

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may not appoint newly qualified teachers without the approval of Her Majesty's Associate Inspector.

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

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 V2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management at all levels, in order to drive improvements in teaching and students' achievement, by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have the expertise and focus to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, students' achievement and behaviour, and that they hold teachers to account for their performance
 - eradicating weak teaching, which over time has a negative impact on students' learning
 - ensuring the pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the achievement of those students it is intended to support
 - ensuring that governors hold school leaders to account effectively regarding the quality of teaching, students' achievement and behaviour
 - improving the curriculum so it ensures all students develop the literacy and numeracy skills they need to achieve well.

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so it is at least consistently good and accelerates students' rate of progress particularly in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - all teachers provide students with activities that challenge them to achieve their best
 - all students are keen to learn and are encouraged to answer challenging questions about what they are being taught
 - teachers mark students' books consistently and well, in order to provide them with the information and advice they need to improve their work and check that students act upon this feedback
 - staff raise their expectations of students' achievement and insist that all students' work is completed and presented to a high standard.

- Raise standards in English and mathematics for all students, but particularly for boys and disadvantaged students, so that they are at least in line with those expected nationally by:
 - providing a very clear and effective structure, which is followed by all staff, for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, including comprehension, grammar and spelling, across the curriculum, from Year 7 through to Year 11
 - further developing older students' personal reading
 - ensuring high expectations of boys' achievement.

- Improve students' behaviour and their attitudes to their work by:
 - dealing consistently and robustly with low level disruptive behaviour in some lessons and occasional boisterous behaviour around the school site
 - ensuring, through improvements to teaching that all students are working well and challenged in their learning and motivated to succeed.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 April 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, supporting headteacher from National Support School (NSS) alliance, members of the senior leadership team, members of staff with responsibility for subjects, members of staff with no additional responsibilities and two groups of students. The inspectors also met with two representatives of the governing body and spoke to the local authority representative. Seventeen lesson observations were completed. A scrutiny of work across a full range of subjects was undertaken by the inspectors, alongside two senior leadership team representatives.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection an assistant leader of English has joined the school and a science technician has left. The leader of the mathematics department has resigned. One governor has resigned and two intend to resign as the governing body reconstitutes for the new school year. The single central record has been amended accordingly.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Staff felt disappointed when the school became subject to special measures. They were shocked because they had taken pride in the school's examination results and had not really considered the progress that students had made from their individual starting points. They now understand that progress is the key to determining the extent of each student's achievements.

The proportion of students forecast to achieve examination results with at least five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is expected to rise this year. The information the school has regarding students' achievement and progress is much more reliable than at the time of the last monitoring inspection. As a result, the school has been able to intervene quickly when students have not achieved well enough. The school's own data predict that the number of students achieving expected or more than expected levels of progress in English is likely to rise significantly. The number of those expected to make expected or more than expected progress in mathematics is predicted to fall. The improvement in English is a result of better day-to-day teaching and a strong focus on marking and feedback, which is starting to have an impact on progress. Across other subjects there is more inconsistent practice which is not always in line with school policy. The recently introduced marking and feedback procedures are being used effectively by some teachers, but not all.

A much more robust system of target-setting and tracking of student progress has been introduced. This, together with recent moves to raise the profile of assessment, is beginning to have an impact on achievement and it is expected that

benchmarking against similar schools locally and nationally will raise standards further and help prepare students better for external assessments.

The attainment gap between disadvantaged students who are supported by the pupil premium funding (additional government money) and those who are not remains wide. The school is now analysing the performance of disadvantaged students as a distinct group and is acting on the findings through improved classroom teaching and specific interventions. The impact of these is regularly reviewed and evaluated to inform future planning.

Individual interventions in English and mathematics have been put in place to plug the gap in students' knowledge, ensuring that they have a better chance of achieving their potential. In the lower school this systematic programme has resulted in impressive gains in English and demonstrates the need to identify potential underachievement early and direct resources to prevent it.

The quality of teaching

Teaching in English has improved since the last inspection. There is consistency throughout the department and this is better supporting progress for students. Teaching in mathematics is still weak because work presented does not meet the needs of students. The pace of learning is too slow to enable students to make progress.

In other subject areas there remains some inconsistency within and across subjects. Overall, the quality of teaching is still too variable. The amount of inadequate teaching has been dramatically reduced. No inadequate teaching was seen during this monitoring inspection but there is still too much teaching that is not yet good enough. This is particularly so where progress is not being tracked carefully enough. In weaker lessons, there is often a lack of differentiation, activities are undemanding and lack challenge, so that they restrict the level of progress that could be achieved.

Evidence of planning by teachers to meet the learning needs of all the students is still not strong enough to secure good or better progress. The school has set up a systematic set of working practices for the teachers to improve the quality and effectiveness of their teaching and this is starting to have an impact. Improving marking and tailoring lessons to meet the needs of all students have been a major focus of the professional development provided for staff.

Large numbers of teachers are enthused about the recently introduced framework for improving teaching, but not all are applying all of the principles consistently to meet the needs of the learners in their classes. More needs to be done to embed the improvement and make sure the best practice is spread across the school.

Senior leaders' systems for checking and monitoring the quality of marking and feedback have improved and are now more rigorous. They are holding teachers to

account for the quality of marking and feedback and are accurate in their assessment for where improvements are still needed.

An analysis of students' work shows some improvements as a result of extensive training, but also highlights some practice which is not in line with school policy. The new feedback/response marking is being used effectively by some teachers and there are some examples of conscientious marking which is personalised and supportive. This is not the case for the majority.

Teachers say that the quality and provision for professional development have improved, with a variety of different strategies being used to promote, secure and share good practice and make observation and feedback more robust. The development of literacy across subjects has improved and is incorporated into many lessons in order to develop spelling, punctuation and extended writing; similarly, numeracy is becoming more focused.

In some lessons students are not motivated or engaged in their learning; this is because work is not sufficiently planned to captivate and enthuse them to have a passion for learning. This is a pivotal area for improvement which the school needs to address.

Slow pace and repetition of activities can also act as barriers to progress. Where teaching is strong, teachers seize opportunities to model learning and there is good verbal and written feedback, which students act upon to develop their understanding. In the lessons where students learn best, teachers skilfully identify and secure key learning points during learning activities to ensure that all learners achieve an effective understanding. The very best examples of teaching were found in English and drama where the teachers' questioning was very effective and conducive to students being able to express answers, views and opinions without embarrassment. A variety of techniques was used to maintain the pace of learning. In a science lesson students showed tangible engagement with their learning as the teacher and technician conducted and demonstrated an experiment to show 'the power of sugar'.

Some teachers use information about their students' progress to plan and teach lessons that ensure further progress for all. Leaders are aware that they need to embed this practice. Accountability of teachers and subject leaders is easier to demonstrate as a result of the availability of more reliable data. Where it is fully utilised in planning, lessons are effective in driving learning forward, but in some areas there is still a need to raise teachers' expectations of what students can achieve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour was judged to be requiring improvement at the last full inspection. During this monitoring inspection most students showed a mature sense of responsibility around the school and were polite, friendly and courteous. However, student attitudes to learning still require improvement and are intrinsically linked to the

quality of teaching they receive. They responded well when the teaching engaged and interested them, but failed to do so in the face of weaker teaching.

Attendance is broadly average, but the gap between advantaged and less advantaged students is still too wide. It is being addressed through intensive work with identified students and their families. However, this is not yet having an impact on closing the gap between the attendance of disadvantaged students and their peers. More needs to be done.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Members of the senior leadership team are ambitious for the school and united in their desire to improve as quickly as possible. This ambition is shared by the governors, the local authority and the diocese. However, they are equally keen that this improvement is sustainable and do not just want a quick fix, which would see the school decline in future years.

Senior leaders in the school, complemented by a supporting headteacher and colleagues from her school, are working extremely hard to bring about the improvements that are necessary. A lot has been achieved since the last inspection with a lot of support. There is evidence that staff have accepted the need for change and there is more openness about the effectiveness of teaching and learning and their links to improved levels of attainment and progress. Staff at all levels know they must bring about significant improvements very quickly. The school now has valid reliable data in a form that is accessible to support this. There is, however, an urgent need to develop the effective use of data further.

The school's structures and systems for managing the performance of its staff are much more evidence-based and systematic. The next stage of development is to give middle leaders more responsibility for driving the improvement in the quality of teaching and embedding and sharing the good practice that exists.

Lesson observations are completed regularly and, as a result, bespoke packages of support are in place for some teachers to enable them to improve their teaching and for their students to make better progress. Teachers understand the need to focus on progress and students recognise that improvements and higher expectations have been achieved. Presently there is inconsistency at middle leader level in their leadership of learning and their accuracy in predicting student outcomes in exams.

Students say that they now know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve but there is inconsistency in informing them of the levels or grades that they are working at. Students find this confusing.

Improvements have been made to the school curriculum to ensure that restrictions to students' choices are kept to a minimum, within the constraints of available funding.

Additional time has been made available to English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 to enable the school to meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum effectively.

The Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body meet regularly, as does the governors' committee which was formed to scrutinise the effectiveness of the school's efforts towards the removal of special measures. This Core Strategic Management Group focuses on students' outcomes and holds the school's leaders to account for the improvements required. There is evidence that this group carries out a robust, rigorous evaluation function.

The group is realistic and, while understanding that there is a long way to go, is planning to build on the positive start. Stronger leadership, reliable data and learning through improved teaching have been the focus for improvement. Regular impact reports will ensure that the group is able to evaluate this effectiveness.

Parents' views of the school as expressed through the online Ofsted Parent View survey appear to be quite negative; however, recent surveys conducted at parents' evenings for Years 7 and 10 give a very different, much more positive picture. Individual responses to the headteacher's request for parental comment to her directly are largely supportive. The school understands the need to continue its drive to get an accurate understanding of parental perception.

The diagnostic reviews that were being commissioned into aspects of the school's leadership and management at the time of the last monitoring inspection have been completed and are being incorporated into whole-school, local authority and individual team development plans.

The local authority statement of action has costed details of support provided or brokered by the local authority through additional funding which it has received to support the school. The Core Strategic Management Group will strive to make the most effective use of the funding.

On the whole, the school now has an accurate view of the progress made since the last full inspection but needs to remember that there still remains much room for improvement.

External support

All stakeholders who were asked, judged the impact of external support on progress towards good to be extremely effective. The supporting headteacher, and the NSS Alliance, are the key sources of support. The supporting headteacher, working alongside senior leaders, has done much to support and challenge, improve the standards of teaching and learning and improve the validity of data. Consultants from the National Teaching School have also been used to work in subject areas to address inconsistencies and to help to drive up the quality of teaching.