



18 March 2006

Mr Paul Heitzman  
Acting Headteacher  
All Hallows Catholic High School  
Brooklands Avenue  
Macclesfield  
Cheshire  
SK11 8LB

Dear Mr Heitzman

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ALL HALLOWS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Marguerite McCloy HMI, and additional inspectors Ross Parker and Stephen Wall to your school on 16 and 17 March, 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, staff, pupils, parents, governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### **Context**

The school was made subject to special measures in September 2005. The three areas for improvement for the school, the diocese and the LA to resolve were concerned with the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school. The headteacher resigned at the end of October 2005 and an acting headteacher was seconded to the school at the beginning of

November. A new permanent headteacher has been appointed to take up the post in September 2006.

### **Achievement and standards**

Pupils' achievement continues to be satisfactory. They enter the school with above average standards from their primary schools, standards remain above average at the end of Key Stage 3, and pupils go on to attain good results at general certificate of secondary education GCSE. Standards are consistently above average with only minor fluctuations from year to year. Results in the national tests at Key Stage 3 in 2005, for example, were slightly higher than they were in 2004. There are variations in the performance of pupils in different subjects, and pupils usually do better in English than in mathematics or science but the differences are not a major concern. However, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are low and have been so for several years. Girls generally achieve better than boys. In some subjects, such as English, design and technology, art and physical education, pupils consistently perform well at GCSE.

Standards in the sixth form are high and students achieve well.

### **Personal development and well-being**

The inspection report made it clear that the substantial majority of pupils and students enjoy school, behave well and feel safe. This situation is unchanged. However, a minority of pupils and parents were concerned about disruption in lessons and bullying. This situation has improved. Management makes a concerted and co-ordinated effort to deal with inappropriate behaviour and this is working. Behaviour in the crowded conditions of the dining hall is considerate. Behaviour management is improving in lessons and the few pupils with poor attitudes are being won round. These improvements have made a tangible difference to how many pupils feel about the school. Their pride in their work and in their school is growing. Their involvement in setting personal curriculum targets is helping them become more responsible about their learning and raising their expectations. The views of pupils are now more formally recognised and much progress has been made in creating an effective school council. For example, pupils and students played a full part in the appointment of the new headteacher. Students in the sixth form have very mature and responsible attitudes. Although pupils, parents and teachers report significant improvements in behaviour, there is still progress to be made. Standards of dress, movement around the school, inappropriate behaviour in lessons and pride in the

presentation of work are all areas where the pupils and staff accept that, although things are much better, they are not yet good enough.

Attendance, in particular the recording and action on absence and late arrival, is an issue for the school to deal with. Current procedures are inadequate.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall. This is broadly unchanged from the September 2005 judgement, but inspectors saw improved aspects of teaching and learning, and the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form was good and sometimes outstanding. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning and the absence of a coherent strategy to deal with this was a significant weakness during the September 2005 inspection. The problem remains, because the range of effectiveness of lessons during this visit spanned the spectrum from inadequate to excellent. However, the whole staff is involved in a debate about teaching and learning and working parties of teachers from different subject departments are looking at a range of strategies for improving practice. This debate, along with the universal use of assessment and individual targets for pupils, is proving a powerful management tool for improvement. Teachers are engaging in the debate with enthusiasm and are more unified and motivated. This is gradually having an effect on practice in lessons and on pupils' learning. Teaching continues to show many strengths, but some of the weaknesses are still evident. Amongst these, the degree of challenge for the more able and the limited use of teaching to promote pupils' involvement and independence are amongst the most important. There is very little use of ICT in lessons to make learning more interesting and exciting. Generally, teachers are aiming their teaching at the middle ability groups in each lesson. They are not making full use of the information they now have from assessments to tailor work more closely to pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding.

The curriculum was not an aspect picked out for improvement in the September 2005 inspection and it has not been a major focus for management action. The lack of provision for ICT has not been resolved, and awaits the move to the new building at the end of summer for full resolution. There has been curriculum development in the sixth form, to broaden the range of vocational courses at the request of students. Managers are now working more closely with the town's college in the students' interests.

The school has made good progress in improving the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils. The introduction of targets for pupils has

made a radical improvement to the guidance that teachers offer to pupils. Without exception, all pupils were able to show and discuss their targets with inspectors. The commitment of staff to the pupils noted in the September 2005 inspection is undiminished. However, because of the clear and co-ordinated management of pastoral care, aimed at improving behaviour through the consistent management of behaviour, teachers are now more effective and more confident about dealing with the low-level disruption to lessons that has occurred in the past. Senior and middle management are also working effectively with the most difficult and vulnerable pupils, and they are having success in modifying their behaviour and re-focusing them on learning. Management systems for updating registration information for pupils who arrive later in the day are not effective.

### **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher has demonstrated outstanding leadership and management. He has effected a remarkable change in the morale and confidence of management and staff at all levels. Communication has been improved. Parents and teachers feel much more involved and informed in the school and its development. Staff, pupils and students, parents, governors and staff of the LA speak of an enthusiasm for change. While acknowledging that it will take time for all the initiatives to come to fruition and lead to the sustained higher achievement of pupils, there is an unmistakable energy for improvement in the school. All stakeholders have been involved in audit and planning and the school has an accurate and realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. School development plans are good, and clearly aimed at removing the causes of special measures. The school's senior leaders, many of whom were newly appointed at the time of the September inspection, work as a unified team and middle managers and teachers have confidence in their ability to follow through on developments from inception to practice. Subject leaders and pastoral managers, for long used to a lack of co-ordination and direction, relish the prospect of moving the school forward and are taking positive steps to do so. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Governors have also risen well to the challenge of being made subject to special measures. This is best seen in their rigorous and inclusive approach to appointing the new headteacher. Following the lead of the acting headteacher and under the guidance of the LA they have built confidence and capacity to sustain improvement by setting up strong systems of management. The capacity for improvement is good.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2005:

- Ensure that management at all levels is working effectively in partnership to improve the level of provision and outcomes for pupils - good progress
- Ensure greater consistency across the school in terms of teaching and learning as well as subject leadership and management in order to raise achievement - satisfactory progress
- Develop more effective and clear communication within the school and with the wider school community in order to promote more effective partnership with parents and learners in order to meet their varying needs - good progress

### **External support**

The LA, working in conjunction with the diocese, has provided good support through a timely and effective statement of action that is clearly focused on what needed to be tackled. Support has been well co-ordinated at a number of management levels and is appreciated by the staff and governing body.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures is good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Make fuller use of information from assessments to improve the match between the work set for pupils and their different levels of knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the monitoring of and response to attendance, lateness and absence.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire and the diocese.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett  
Her Majesty's Inspector