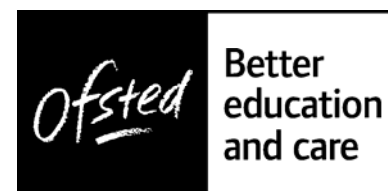


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6 June 2006

Mr J O'Neill  
Headteacher  
Newman Catholic School  
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Cumbria  
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Dear Mr O'Neill

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Andrew Margerison, Mary Sewell and Anne Wallis, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 5 and 6 June 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2004.

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, including 16 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with yourself, senior staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

It has been confirmed that the school is not included in Carlisle's proposed reorganisation, and discussions are taking place with the local authority regarding collaborative arrangements for 14-19 year-olds. Although staffing has stabilised to a great extent, two members of staff are on long term sick leave. Some A level students are being taught at another school. The English department has been

reorganised Technology staffing will be reduced from the start of the autumn term, moving from 4.5 to 4 staff.

Since the last monitoring inspection in February, the local authority has continued to provide support from the school improvement officer and a two-day review was conducted in March. Mentoring support for the headteacher is now being provided.

The school has a projected shortfall in its budget for 2006-7 due to the fall in student numbers, high costs for temporary staff and an overspend on alternative provision. The projected three-year budget seeks to bring this into balance.

The present inspection focused on achievement and standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, on special educational needs and inclusion, and on subjects and aspects of subjects not previously inspected by Ofsted since the school became subject to special measures. As on previous visits leadership and management were inspected.

### **Achievement and standards**

Achievement and standards in the lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to inadequate at both Key Stages 3 and 4. In no lessons were standards better than satisfactory. The number of lessons seen in the sixth form was too few to come to an overall judgement.

In Key Stage 3 lessons, standards are too frequently reduced by teaching which lacks pace and challenge. In particular, students are not actively involved in their learning. This led to poor attitudes to work and poor behaviour. In the lessons seen standards in English and mathematics were below average. The school's view is that overall standards for these students are rising and targets are likely to be met. From the lessons seen, particularly in religious education where students start their GCSE in Year 9, evidence to support this view is limited. Variations in attainment across subjects and between classes taught by different teachers are significant, and these should be addressed.

Six lessons were seen in Key Stage 4 and these provided a variable picture. Standards were broadly average: in no lessons were they above average. The year 11 overall target for five grades A\* to C at GCSE will not be met, according to the results of the mock examinations. The school's most recent internal assessments also indicate that students are unlikely to meet their targets in a significant number of subjects.

In the sixth form no clear overview of current standards is available. However in the present term a start has been made to chart students' progress towards their targets: this is paper-based information. No summary sheets giving predicted grades for Year 13 pupils were available.

The school has developed systems for monitoring students' progress. These are beginning to be implemented in Key Stages 3 and 4, but have yet to be used in the

sixth form. Most staff are aware of the need to analyse information from this monitoring; however not all do so, and it is not generally used to plan future learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- Improve standards at the end of Year 9 and GCSE – inadequate.

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

Students' attitudes vary from outstanding to inadequate, mainly as a consequence of the quality of teaching. In the majority of lessons, attitudes were good. However where the teaching did not actively interest or involve the students, they were required to sit passively for extended periods, frequently in silence. In other lessons, classroom management by teachers was inadequate, students drifted away from the tasks set and lost concentration.

In the best lessons, students enjoy their learning and are actively involved. Many students reported frustration due to variable experiences in different lessons. This was linked to the quality of teaching and to temporary teachers not providing continuity in learning. The school is currently using fewer temporary staff.

The school has recently adopted a rewards system. This is not used consistently and requires closer monitoring. The number of exclusions has been reduced through the use of internal exclusions – a positive development. In a number of lessons students were sent out of the room for poor behaviour, in some cases not returning until after the end of the lesson. These students were not properly monitored whilst out of classes, and alternative approaches to managing behaviour are not used sufficiently. In the best lessons, the work set provided good challenges for students, who worked hard and behaved well, not requiring any sanctions. In such cases students' attitudes towards their learning were very positive, in marked contrast to elsewhere.

Attendance has improved since the inspection in February, due to more rigorous monitoring with better systems being now in place overseen by the deputy headteacher. The Department for Education and Skills is working with the school to raise attendance. The school is also monitoring more closely the attendance of students placed in other provision, although the Carlisle Achievement Zone is reported not to provide information on attendance sufficiently frequently. The local authority is aware of this situation and intends to take action on it.

There are some examples of students serving the community, including sixth formers providing football coaching, and also raising funds for charity.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching ranges from outstanding to inadequate. Where teaching was good or better, the tasks set were well matched to students' prior attainment and provided appropriate challenges to extend learning. Some teachers have received

good support to raise the quality of their teaching. The positive impact of this professional development was evident in the lessons observed.

The quality of lesson planning also varies widely. Whilst a common format is used, some plans were detailed with clear objectives and content. Others were brief and did not provide tasks to meet the needs of students at different levels of attainment. The school does not regularly monitor lesson plans, or ensure that all departments do this.

Assessment procedures have been developed recently in Key Stages 3 and 4, although their impact is not yet apparent. In the sixth form, good examples of diagnostic assessment were reported by students, but were said not to be used in all subjects. Target setting has been introduced although it is not consistently used across all subjects. The meaning of levels or grades is not clear to all students and many do not know how to improve their work to reach higher levels. Marking practices also vary: the best examples provide clear guidance on how to improve work and raise standards. The implementation of the new systems consistently across all subjects and in all year groups is not yet complete and the overall process is being implemented too slowly.

Support for students identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good: provision is well organised and managed within the existing resources. Support for individual students with behavioural difficulties is good, especially from the student support officers, although they are mainly reactive to needs at present. Good multi-agency meetings have been held since November, but are not yet fully in place. A minority of students have behavioural needs which have not yet been fully identified.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 with better planning, delivery and assessment – inadequate
- Assess students' attainment against the standards they have demonstrated previously in order to ensure that they make the necessary progress – satisfactory.

## **Leadership and management**

The school's improvement planning has been updated with three documents, linked to an overview 'The Big Picture 15.5.06'. There are some inconsistencies between these documents which need scrutiny by the senior management. In particular the 'Development Plan 2006-8' does not have space to indicate when goals have been achieved. There is a need to link all three plans, so that each refers more directly to the others, including timescales for action and opportunities to provide review information and dates.

Job descriptions have been issued for most posts, but those for co-ordinator for special educational needs, heads of year, head of key skills, examinations manager

and work experience manager have yet to be completed. The action plan, January to July 2006, indicates that this was to have been completed by the end of May.

The school has established departmental monitoring procedures. These are being undertaken in turn for each department. This is a relatively slow process which does not sufficiently address the needs of individual staff who would benefit from more regular monitoring, support and development.

Citizenship work is being developed. The teacher leading this area has a number of other management roles, but has been able to establish a programme which currently uses time allocated to personal, social and health education. A survey of cross-curricular links with subjects has been undertaken, although a significant number of departments have not yet responded. This development is not sufficiently monitored and promoted by senior management.

The school has established several potentially good management systems, but at present these are not fully implemented and their use is not always monitored effectively. As a consequence, and as noted during the last inspection, the pace of change and development is too slow, and inconsistent practices between subjects and year groups remain. The headteacher does not always ensure that agreed policies are fully implemented and the limited overview of many of these changes potentially undermines strategic planning. Together with the often slow rate of progress, the school's capacity to improve is now becoming a cause for concern. The leadership of the school does not have a sufficiently clear view of the current rate of progress and this is leading the deputy and assistant heads to become reactive rather than enabling them to promote further changes.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004

- Increase the amount and quality of monitoring and evaluation of the school by subject managers, reinforced by senior managers, in order to raise standards – inadequate
- Compliance with the statutory requirements for citizenship – inadequate
- Compliance with the statutory requirements for reporting to parents – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The support of the local authority's school improvement officer continues to be valued, particularly in making shared lesson observations. The authority conducted a two-day monitoring visit in March 2006. This made helpful recommendations related to the key issues from the school's inspection in November 2004. These forms of support are continuing.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection - inadequate

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase the pace of progress in all aspects of the school's work; in particular improve academic achievement and the quality of teaching, raising all teaching to the level of the best.
- Ensure that the headteacher monitors the implementation of agreed policies.
- Continue to raise attendance in all year groups. Ensure that all students receive their entitlement to full-time education, including those who attend provision elsewhere on a part-time basis.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Corporate Director of Education for Cumbria and the Diocese of Lancaster.

Yours sincerely

Martin Bradley  
**H M Inspector**