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3 March 2010

Mr Martin Callagher  
Headteacher  
Corpus Christi Catholic Sports College  
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Dear Mr Callagher

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I and additional inspector Julie Price-Grimshaw inspected your school on 2 March 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please forward our thanks to your chair of governors, the School Improvement Partner and your students for their help during the visit.

As a result of the inspection on 1–2 April 2008, the school was asked to.

- Accelerate the rising trend of achievement and standards at Key Stage 3.
- Ensure that students are set challenging targets, based on their capabilities and that their progress is carefully monitored by staff at all levels.
- Raise students' awareness of how they can improve their current performance.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in both making improvements and in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school provides a calm and orderly environment where students behave well and where relationship between students and staff are very positive. Students enter the school with well below average prior attainment. Low literacy and numeracy levels remain a strong barrier to learning. Students since 2007 have had much lower starting points than previous cohorts, particularly in literacy, when joining the school. There have been significant changes to staffing since the last inspection. This

September 2009



has included some changes at senior leadership and middle management level as well as a complete change to staffing in the mathematics department.

Achievement and standards dipped both in 2008 and 2009. However, the school's own monitoring data show encouraging indications that standards will improve in 2010 resulting in improved GCSE results. The school feels confident that it will achieve this success because a larger number of the Year 11 students have already gained GCSE qualifications. Currently 32% of students have already gained at least a C grade in mathematics while 67% of students in English have gained at least a grade C in coursework compared to 46% the previous year. Standards observed and work scrutinised in Years 7, 8 and 9 were at least satisfactory and some were good. The school has developed and implemented strategies to tackle low literacy and numeracy levels. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities demonstrate good progress in 2009.

Strategies to tackle low attainment at Key Stage 4 have been accelerated during the last year. More effective tracking of students' progress has allowed for appropriate intervention strategies especially at the GCSE C/D borderline. These included peer and staff mentoring schemes, additional revision and motivational sessions and 'booster' sessions in a local sixth form college. Students confirmed this when they spoke of an 'increase' in pace and expectations and of 'better learning' in lessons in Year 10 and 11. Students have a much better understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve further. However, the school acknowledges that the pace of change has been too slow and resulted in insufficient impact on attainment and progress levels during 2008 and much of 2009. Too many students have not achieved at their expected level. Senior leaders recognise the need for greater promotion and solidification of a culture of improvement and higher aspirations.

Teaching and learning were graded as good at the April 2008 inspection. During the monitoring visit no inadequate teaching was observed. Some good teaching was observed. In those good lessons, expectations are high and students make good progress because of effective teaching with plenty of challenge, variety and a brisk pace. However, in too many lessons, students were passive and the pace slow. Students were insufficiently motivated and consequently were not fully engaged in learning. Assessment of learning remains underdeveloped. Insufficient use is made of best practitioners to promote better teaching and learning. The school continues to build a more responsive curriculum and has developed good links with external partners particularly to support provision for lower-attaining students. The sports specialism continues to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning and in broadening the curriculum. For example, a close partnership between the sports and modern foreign languages (MFL) departments has seen an increased uptake to 30% of current Year 9 studying MFL. Plans have been approved for building a new engineering centre, which will further broaden curricular choice.

The school's self-evaluation is over generous in a number of key areas and needs to take greater account of the impact of achievement and standards on all aspects of provision. Challenging targets are now set for students, although when achieved some are unsure of how to accelerate their performance further. Attendance continues to improve and has been enhanced by the appointment of a dedicated attendance manager and officer. Target setting, monitoring and intervention strategies have been tightened, as has the use and sharing of data analysis to promote improvement. Subject leaders and teachers are now more accountable. Governors are taking a robust approach to holding senior managers to account for performance. Senior leaders and the School's Improvement Partner work closely together to make sure the school is moving in the right direction. However, since the last inspection, the pace of improvement and change has not been sufficient and it is only recently that achievement and standards have demonstrated improvement. This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them at that point to be secure and meeting requirements.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty  
Her Majesty's Inspector