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3 April 2014

Ms J Warburton  
Headteacher  
Cardinal Newman Catholic High School  
Bridgewater Avenue  
Latchford  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA4 1RX

Dear Ms Warburton

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cardinal Newman Catholic High School, Warrington**

Following my visit to your school on 2 April 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

The diocese, local authority, senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement relating to governance identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Senior leaders are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement relating to teaching identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and chairs of governors' committees work together to provide strategic direction for the Governing Body
- identify governors' training needs and ensure these are met
- define the role of governors in monitoring and evaluating the school's plans for improvement
- ensure that senior leaders, governors, the diocese and the local authority check that links between their plans are identified and that no important actions are missed because it is not clear who is responsible for the specific actions
  
- ensure that teachers implement the marking and presentation policies consistently.

## **Evidence**

Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, students, the Chair of Governors and three other governors, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Documents, including post-inspection action plans prepared by the school, the diocese and the local authority, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school information about the quality of teaching were evaluated. Samples of students' work from Years 7, 9 and 11 were reviewed. Classrooms were visited, accompanied by the headteacher and two students.

## **Context**

The federation between Cardinal Newman Catholic High School and St Gregory's Catholic High School has been dissolved. A new governing body of Cardinal Newman Catholic High School has been appointed. This will take on full responsibility at the start of May 2014. The previous Head of School within the federated arrangements has been appointed to be headteacher. The school's diocesan links are now with the Diocese of Shrewsbury alone.

## **Main findings**

The diocese and local authority responded immediately and decisively to the inspection. Plans to strengthen governance by dissolving the federation and establishing a separate governing body for the school were quickly agreed. A new governing body for the school has been formed. Governors are determined to fulfil their responsibilities as quickly as possible. They have started to do this with enthusiasm. Governors' skills and experience match the needs of the school. The new governing body worked with the diocese and local authority to ensure that the appointment of a headteacher was completed quickly. This has reduced any uncertainty over the school's leadership.

Despite the very early stages of the work of the governing body, good relationships are being established between the governors and senior leaders. These are already proving helpful as governors ask probing questions and develop their understanding of the school. Governors have already visited the school to see its work. Minutes of the first meeting of the governing body record scrutiny of school activity and indicate a willingness to take important decisions. Sub-committees of the governing body covering school improvement, and finance and personnel are planned. Governors recognise that they need to access training to support their development. This must include training about their roles and responsibilities, data on school performance and financial matters.

The local authority is working to produce an up-to-date analysis of the school's financial situation to inform governors' decisions. This information is not yet available. It is important that this work is completed as soon as possible.

School leaders have ensured that the good quality of education has been maintained over this period of transition. It is essential that the rapid development of governance continues. Governors should consider further how the Chair, Vice-Chair and the chairs of the committees can pool their expertise to lead this development. The review of governance should be undertaken once the governing body is fully established to provide advice on any aspects needing further work.

Within the school, teaching and learning are improving. Existing plans to improve the quality of teaching have been refined. Closer scrutiny by senior leaders identifies any less effective teaching. Individual programmes are set up to help teachers develop when needed. Good practice is being shared. For example, strategies for assessing students' work in drama and music have improved. These strategies are based on effective approaches in the technology department and other subject departments.

The quality and impact of teachers' marking is inconsistent. Opportunities to support students' literacy are not always taken. Misspellings of key words in students' work are too often not identified by teachers. Literacy targets are set for students but these do not always reflect their individual needs and are not monitored closely by teachers in their marking. A new policy on how students should present their work has been developed. Students confirm that expectations of presentation have been raised. However, work in some exercise books does not meet the standards required and passes without comment by teachers.

A post-inspection action plan has been prepared by senior leaders. This is being carefully monitored to make sure that actions happen when planned. The changes to governance have meant that governors have not yet had time to review the plan in detail. Neither have they confirmed how they will be involved in ensuring that actions have the expected impact.

Improvement plans have also been prepared by the diocese and the local authority. While the different plans make it clear which partners are responsible for taking particular actions, all involved must ensure that links between the plans are understood and that no important actions are missed because of a lack of clarity where they fit in.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Support from the diocese and local authority since the inspection has been considerable. Their close partnership has ensured that the governing body has been put in place as quickly as possible. This support will continue as it becomes fully established. The local authority has brokered a National Leader of Governance to work with the school.

The school has effective partnerships with other local schools. These include a programme to improve teaching which is used to provide models of outstanding practice and support for individual teachers. Teachers from Cardinal Newman Catholic High School are sharing good practice relating to computing with other schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Warrington and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**