

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View
Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524 **Direct T** 01695 566932

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com

26 June 2015

Mr Tony Billings

Executive headteacher

St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School

Grangeway

Runcorn

Cheshire

WA7 5YH

Dear Mr Billings

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School

Following my visit with Alan Parkinson and Anthony Nicholson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 23 and 24 June 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 and your leadership team 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Director of Children's Services for Halton.

Yours sincerely

Denis Oliver

Additional Inspector

Appointed as an Associate Inspector, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that students' achievement across the school accelerates rapidly, particularly in English, mathematics, geography and history, at GCSE and in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that teachers use all the information they have on students' capability to plan activities that will challenge students to think hard, deepen their understanding, awaken their curiosity, and raise their expectations of what can be achieved
 - ensuring that teachers maximise the opportunities in lessons to check their students' understanding, making sure that students have captured the key ideas in order to progress their learning
 - making sure that when teachers mark students' work, they focus on those aspects that will bring about the greatest gains in students' understanding in order to accelerate their progress, and then making sure that students act on this advice.

- Increase the proportion of students, and in particular disadvantaged students, making expected progress and more than expected progress in English and mathematics at GCSE, so that both measures are at least in line with national figures.

- As a matter of urgency improve the impact of leadership and management in improving the quality of teaching, and so raise standards of achievement by:
 - ensuring that the senior leaders' and governors' evaluation of how well the school is doing, including the quality of teaching, is rigorous and robust and used to inform the priorities in the school development plan
 - ensuring governors use a range of sources of evidence on the school's performance to enable them to provide an appropriate level of challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account
 - continuing to develop rigorous systems for monitoring students' progress across the school and in all subjects and using this information to target effective extra help for those students who are falling behind
 - using performance management to improve teachers' classroom practice and hold them rigorously to account for students' achievement
 - ensuring that improving the quality of teaching features as one of the key areas for improvement in the school development plan
 - ensuring that the information published on the school website meets statutory requirements.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations to the appropriate authority responsible for the school.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of school, executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, members of staff with responsibility for subjects, members of staff with no additional responsibilities and three groups of students. They scrutinised current data on achievement, attendance and exclusions, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, the minutes of the governing body meetings and the school's self-evaluation document.

The inspectors also met with two representatives of the governors' Interim Executive Committee and spoke with local authority representatives and the school challenge advisor. Twenty-three visits to lessons were undertaken across a range of subjects and year groups. A scrutiny of work across a full range of subjects was also undertaken by the inspectors, alongside four senior leadership team representatives.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a teacher of science and a new data manager have joined the staff of the school. Two teachers of English and a learning mentor have left. The single central record has been amended accordingly.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Data presented to inspectors indicate that current Year 11 students in 2015 are likely to attain GCSE grades that are a significant improvement on the school's 2014 results. The proportion of students forecasted to achieve five A* to C grades at GCSE level, including English and mathematics, is predicted to improve. However, the school is unlikely to achieve its ambitious target of 60%. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers is predicted to fall.

The number of students likely to make expected progress in mathematics and English is also expected to rise, significantly so in English with much less improvement expected in mathematics.

School data also predict that the gap in the levels of progress that disadvantaged students make compared to their peers will fall in mathematics but increase in English. More needs to be done to close this gap and to analyse the gaps in progress and attainment between other significant sub-groups in the school.

In 2014, the school's assessment of students' achievement was shown to be inaccurate and overgenerous. Senior leaders have more confidence in the current data because the school has introduced robust individual, subject and whole-school target setting, which is firmly based on student's previous attainment. It has also introduced formal assessments at set points and a tracking system which is

becoming increasingly sophisticated and effective in identifying the standard at which students are achieving and, therefore, where students are underachieving. The accuracy of assessment is moderated through external verification from a number of sources.

However, the data is that which the school has collected internally and, therefore, remain unvalidated by the external examination system. Inspectors are most cautious about the grades that the school is projecting from its actual assessment outcomes. This process is new to the school and as yet, remains untested.

The tracking data that the school collects are shared with students and their parents in visual 'flight paths' which show clearly where the individual students should be at fixed points in their courses and where their assessments place them. The 'flight paths' have become embedded very rapidly into the day-to-day teaching in the school. Students at Key Stages 4 and 5, in particular, are used to them and value them in helping them to move on in their learning. They say that the 'flight paths' help them to know where best to channel their efforts. Although the same process has been introduced at Key Stage 3, the priority so far has been to embed it in national examination years. The school intends to further develop its use at Key Stage 3 in the coming year.

Students made at least good progress in approximately half of the lessons observed during the monitoring inspection. Where learning was strongest teachers used progress data effectively to identify students' individual needs and plan appropriate activities. However, in some lessons insufficient reference was made by teachers to performance data, resulting in the same tasks and expectations being set for all students.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has been a major focus for improvement in the school. Since the last inspection, a standardised structure for lesson planning and delivery has been adopted by most of the school's teachers who have embraced the change. There is considerable evidence gained through lesson observation, work scrutiny and talking to teachers and students, that such planning is becoming embedded in most lessons; indications are that it is improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, there is some degree of inconsistency within and across subjects. Students remarked that this was particularly the case in history lessons.

Students in the sixth form have seen a more organised and consistent approach to their teachers' lesson planning and teaching. However, some thought such an approach was more effective in some subjects than others, where it requires further adaptation to meet their needs. The school should continue to identify, develop and embed best practice associated with such an approach. Excellent practitioners could, for example, play a more active and central role in improving teaching and learning through sharing best practice.

The school has made the quality of marking and feedback to students a priority. The expectation is that when work is marked, written feedback will start a 'learning conversation' between the teacher and student, resulting in increased reflection on learning and a deeper understanding by students.

Considerable professional development time has been devoted to modelling best practice with the aim that this is universally adopted by teachers. There has been significant progress in this since the last monitoring inspection with much more marking which is now exemplary and successfully moving learning on. This is particularly the case where feedback is given as specific tasks to be completed or powerful questions posed for the student with adequate time given for the student to reflect and respond.

Many students respond to their teachers' comments using the 'purple pen'. However, middle leaders are not ensuring that this approach is consistently applied. As a result, some students ignore their teacher's comments and continue to make the same mistakes. The school should continue its efforts to ensure students are responding reflectively to feedback provided in marking.

A book scrutiny carried out by senior leaders and inspectors identified numerous examples of good practice which will be shared with teachers in their regular professional development sessions. It also identified that not all subject areas are successfully adopting the process and that there was considerable inconsistency in science. Many teachers mark students' spelling, punctuation and grammar but this too is inconsistent between and within subjects.

Teachers are increasingly planning lessons that engage students' interest and hold their attention. Where learning was strongest, students were, for example, working in small groups to share information and develop their own thinking, as well as being challenged by the teacher and by their peers. As a result, they were learning from each other and developing their oracy and communication skills when reporting back to the whole class with their findings.

Similarly, the most effective learning in the school was seen to take place when teachers reflected on the learning that has taken place in previous lessons and they used effective strategies to ensure all students make good progress, regardless of their starting points. However, some teachers find this practice difficult. When reflecting on the effectiveness of their teaching they tend to focus on the completion of planned activities rather than the appropriateness of the tasks and the quality of the learning.

In the lessons where learning was less effective, students were uninspired by the lesson content and how it was presented. In some classes, the work was far too easy and teachers missed opportunities to challenge students' thinking and deepen their knowledge.

The professional development programmes and opportunities available to teachers and support staff at all levels of responsibility in the school have increased considerably since the last inspection. Most are designed to improve teachers' effectiveness while others are increasingly targeted to meet the needs of the school and to support teachers with their specific roles and responsibilities. A number are delivered by partners from the school's growing number of networks but increasingly they are delivered by colleagues from within the school on 'CPD Thursdays'. These sessions are very popular and well received by the majority of staff who have found them highly effective in meeting their needs.

In order to further develop the effectiveness of classroom teaching and to support learning, the school has decided to fundamentally change the role of members of the support team. This will mean that learning mentors will have a stronger focus on academic mentoring in their new job descriptions.

The quality and amount of homework students receive remains variable as is its impact on improving students' learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Throughout the monitoring visit, the only occasional low-level misbehaviour encountered was when work given to students failed to engage or challenge them. Students' attitudes to learning are generally positive and the school remains a calm and well-ordered environment with a purposeful atmosphere. Students are polite and respectful. They remain clear in the belief that good behaviour is important for them to learn and make progress in lessons. However, the lines of referral when misbehaviour does occur are not as clear as they should be. The school should consider the introduction of a behaviour management system and revisit behavior protocols to ensure students develop behaviours which rise to the challenge of the new approaches to teaching and learning.

Attendance failed to reach the ambitious target that was set for this year, despite the targeted work of the attendance and inclusion team. However, while senior leaders and governors intend to continue to strive to achieve this target in future years, consideration could be given to the setting of more realistic and achievable targets.

Comparisons of current punctuality data with previous would suggest that lateness is becoming more common. However, the recent data reflect the school's raising of expectations by closing registers earlier and this has highlighted a problem that was there but which was not apparent previously. The school has robust plans to address the problem.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Members of the leadership team, led by the executive headteacher, are relentlessly driving forward improvement. Many targeted initiatives have been introduced, some

are becoming embedded and some have just started. All of the initiatives address the prime objective of improving teaching and learning and through that, students' achievement and attainment.

The impact of these initiatives so far have been that the quality of teaching has improved. Teachers are more engaged and confident, outcomes are improving, particularly at Key Stages 4 and 5, tracking systems are much improved and data is much more meaningful. The school should continue to work on improving the rigour of the assessment system to ensure credibility and reliability of data for use in the monitoring and tracking of students' performance.

The school's structures and systems for managing the performance of its staff are now much more evidence based and systematic and are supported by external lesson observations by experienced, qualified observers.

The school has commissioned a number of external reviews of the effectiveness of teaching and learning and leadership in a number subjects.

The review of geography noted the previous weaknesses of leadership and teaching and learning and made a number of clear recommendations which, if implemented successfully should help to result in significant improvements.

The review of history was very critical of leadership and teaching and learning. Subsequently, a raising attainment plan has been put in place and a new subject leader appointed.

The review of science had only just been completed at the time of this monitoring inspection. It concluded that leadership in the department required improvement and that the subject leader should take a more interventionist role in quality assurance and holding colleagues to account for their teaching and the progress made by students. Consequently, the school should continue to develop middle leaders to take more responsibility for self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Governors are now much more involved in the strategic leadership of the school and have taken responsibility for all school improvement. They should, however, continue their comprehensive programme to develop their collective effectiveness.

External support

Support from the executive headteacher and his school, which has been commissioned by the local authority and the two dioceses, has been the key factor in effecting the improvements that have been made since the school became subject to special measures. It is important that the school now develops a coherent strategy to ensure that it becomes progressively more autonomous as the support from the National Support School is reduced.