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Thursday 15 September 2011

Dr C Meehan  
Headteacher  
St Cuthbert's RC Business and Enterprise College  
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Lancashire  
OL16 4RX

Dear Dr Meehan

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Cuthbert's RC Business and Enterprise College**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Derek Barnes, additional inspector and I inspected your school on Wednesday 14 September 2011, for the time you gave to meeting with me on 13 September and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the students who gave up their time to talk with Derek and to the staff who spoke to us.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to staffing but no permanent changes at middle or senior leadership. The school moved to a six period day with shorter lessons in September 2010 and introduced a new behaviour management system. Initial evaluations of these changes have generally been positive from students and staff. In July 2010, the school was one of the first schools to achieve the Enterprise in Education Award. A decision has been taken to close the sixth form at the end of this academic year.

As a result of the inspection on Wednesday 30 June 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

The unvalidated 2011 school data on the attainment of students at the end of Year 11 show improvement in a number of key areas. The proportion of the year group who obtained five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics rose from 43% in 2010 to 50% in 2011. The percentage of students who attained five A\* to C grades also rose from 57% to 67%. These results were the best they have been in the last three years and show a significant improvement on 2010 when overall attainment declined to well below the national average. Attainment improved across many subjects in 2011. The attainment of girls also improved in 2011.

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The improved outcomes for Year 11 students are due to a number of factors but the major one is the effective use of intervention strategies. The school has implemented a revised central system for monitoring students' progress and this is used to target extra support towards students at risk of underachievement. Intervention strategies such as after-school classes, one-to-one support and residential visits have been well-focused on Year 11 and have had a positive impact on progress and attainment. Students and their parents now receive regular and more frequent updates on students' performance and their attitudes to learning. The use of assessment and tracking data to plan intervention strategies in other years in the main school and for specific groups of learners is less well-developed. It is being used to target additional support to improve literacy skills for younger students but it is too early to judge the impact of this intervention.

The shorter but increased number of lessons and the impact of the new behaviour management system have resulted in improved behaviour in lessons and no disruptive behaviour was observed during the visit. The students' behaviour around the school was calm and orderly.

These improvements illustrate the school's growing capacity for sustained improvement. The headteacher continues to provide a strong sense of drive and ambition which is beginning to bring results. This commitment to raising standards is shared by leaders at all levels. The middle leaders are working more effectively together to identify and tackle underachievement and to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Good progress has been made in developing a culture of collaboration where expertise and ideas are shared and this is starting to raise standards in some subjects, particularly in mathematics and English. Middle leaders have benefited from links with a successful local school and from continuing professional development opportunities. While the monitoring and evaluation of subject areas is improving and shows increased rigour and accountability, there remains some variability in the effectiveness in improving the quality of provision.

The enterprise specialism has provided opportunities for students to experience a wider range of activities and, particularly during Enterprise Week, opportunities to participate in and enjoy activities that help develop creativity and thinking skills.

The school is engaging appropriately with external partners and the School Improvement Partner provided well-focused support in validating the senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning in June 2011 and in identifying key areas for development. Accurate school monitoring shows that progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning and the Learning and Teaching Group has played an effective role in this development. Some progress has been made in improving the use of assessment information to differentiate and appropriately plan lessons to meet all students' needs and to increase the level of challenge. However, senior leaders are aware that there is still considerable scope for improvement. The quality and consistency of marking have improved. Students are clearer about the progress they are making but do not always receive specific feedback about the next steps they need to take. Senior leaders recognise

that to secure good progress for all they need to continue to increase the proportion of good teaching and are planning appropriately to achieve this.

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

Yours sincerely

Mrs Linda Tetik  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place Wednesday 30 June 2010**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - using information from the assessment of students' progress to ensure that work in lessons meets all students' needs, particularly those of girls
  - increasing the level of challenge in lessons
  - improving the quality and consistency of marking and feedback so that students understand clearly what they need to do to improve.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that middle leaders consistently and rigorously monitor the quality of provision in their subjects
  - thoroughly analysing tracking data and using this to inform improvement planning in the school and in the sixth form.