

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 857

Direct F 01695 729 320

Direct email: jkinsman@cfbt.com

13 May 2014

Mr Keith Ballard
Headteacher
Our Lady and St John Catholic College
North Road
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB1 1PY

Dear Mr Ballard

Special measures monitoring inspection of Our Lady and St John Catholic College

Following my visit to the college on 12 May 2014, 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 gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the college's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the college became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held a meeting with you and senior leaders and a meeting with six representatives from the governing body. You took me on a tour of the college, which included a brief observation of break time. I evaluated the college's improvement plans and the local authority's statement of action. I also met two representatives of the local authority and a representative from Salford Diocese.

Context

Since the inspection, an experienced governor has been appointed to support the work of the governing body. A senior teacher in the mathematics department left at Christmas.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders, including governors, are committed to improving the college quickly. Although very disappointed by the judgements in the inspection, the leaders are motivated and determined to tackle each of the weaknesses identified in the report. During my visit I observed some of break and lunchtime. Students mixed well together, regardless of age, gender or racial heritage, which is an improvement on some of the issues identified in the inspection report. The college's improvement plans need to be amended to include students' opinions. For example, the plans to improve marking and feedback to students are appropriate and could be effective, but there is a missing opportunity to use the views of students about how their work is marked and how they receive feedback.

With support from Salford Diocese, senior leaders have taken action to link with a National Leader in Education, who will lead a review of the college's effectiveness. This has not yet taken place, but is due to be completed in the next few weeks. However, senior leaders have started to take action to improve the college. To increase the level of challenge, leaders have changed the system to track students' progress based on students making three or four levels of progress from their starting points in Year 7. As a result, the targets for students' achievement have been raised.

Senior leaders have organised support from other schools. The head of department for English, for example, has met with the head of department from St Augustine's High School, judged to be outstanding. As a result of this link, there have been improvements to how the English department assesses students' work.

Senior leaders trained heads of departments in recording assessments on the college's data system; as a result, all middle leaders have increased confidence in tracking the progress students make in different teaching groups. Fortnightly meetings between senior leaders and heads of departments have increased the focus on quickening students' progress.

The governing body has met twice since the inspection. It has created a smaller group of governors to act as a core group to meet frequently to check on the college's progress and to take decisions on behalf of the full governing body. It is too early to evaluate any impact of this decision, because the core group has not yet met. The governing body has shown its commitment to improving the college swiftly by releasing funds to tackle some areas of weakness. The governing body has identified a National Leader in Governance to review its ability and effectiveness. The review has not yet taken place. The governing body is waiting for the review to establish an action plan to improve. As a result, it has not taken any significant

action as yet to tackle the issues raised in the inspection report about governance, such as increasing governors' knowledge about assessment data. The governors have not taken any action to collect or collate the views of parents or to keep them informed about the college's progress, such as through a well-designed website or through newsletters.

By the end of this inspection the local authority's statement of action was fit for purpose; it contained the main strategies for the college to be removed from special measures by December 2015 and, after amendments, had an indication about how the college will consult and inform parents about the college's progress. No meeting for parents has taken place and, as yet, there has been no attempt to collect their views or to inform them about progress. The targets for improvement in the statement of action need to be amended, so that gaps in achievement of different groups of students start to decrease.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

The college improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The college may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Blackburn with Darwen. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector