

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566939  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
glankertis@cfbt.com



10 July 2014

Mr Andrew Dawson  
Interim Headteacher  
St Gregory's Catholic High School  
Cromwell Avenue  
Westbrook  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA5 1HG

Dear Mr Dawson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Gregory's Catholic High School**

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors Mary Liptrot and Kath Harris, to your school on 8 and 9 July 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013. 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 to any department before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Interim Executive Director Families & Wellbeing for Warrington and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013**

- Rapidly raise achievement in science and for students who are eligible for the pupil premium, those who are less able, those who are educated off-site and those who are disabled or have special educational needs by:
  - insisting that all teaching is high quality and carefully planned to meet students' needs
  - making sure that the subjects and activities on offer are well organised and suitable for students' needs
  - ensuring that all books are marked and that marking promotes better progress
  - regularly listening to and acting upon students' views
  - meticulously tracking students' progress.
  
- Urgently improve behaviour and safety by:
  - improving the attendance of those who are persistently absent or whose attendance is low
  - ensuring that students have a good understanding of prejudice, discrimination and human rights so they know what kind of language is acceptable and what may cause offence to others.
  
- Establish effective leadership and management at all levels by:
  - ensuring that there are effective and timely policies and procedures in place for safeguarding and behaviour, including anti-bullying and child protection
  - gaining an accurate view of the day-to-day quality of teaching and giving teachers helpful and specific feedback to help them improve their practice
  - ensuring that robust arrangements for safeguarding are in place
  - using performance management to swiftly eradicate aspects of weak management across the school
  - ensuring that governors fulfil their statutory duties, regularly hold leaders to account and have an in-depth understanding of the school's finances.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on 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.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 to 9 July 2014.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of students, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

### **Context**

Considerable changes to staffing have taken place since the last inspection visit. The executive headteacher resigned with effect from 1 April and two members of the senior leadership team retired on 30 April. The head of school assumed responsibility for the school until an interim headteacher took up his appointment on 22 April after the Easter holiday when she was assimilated into the school structure as a substantive deputy headteacher. An interim deputy headteacher was appointed for the summer term from a neighbouring outstanding school. The school has appointed from September 2014 a substantive headteacher and a second substantive deputy headteacher and a business manager.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

School data indicate that current Year 11 students are likely to attain GCSE grades that are similar to, or slightly above, the school's 2013 results. It is not anticipated that the attainment gap will have narrowed between students who are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding) and their peers. This is because the strategies put in place to improve the attainment and progress of this group were introduced too recently to have had a significant impact on students' learning and progress.

Students are making good levels of progress in English regardless of their starting points. This is evident in the school's data and in the progress students make in lessons. School data show that the majority of students, including the least able, are making expected levels of progress in mathematics. Rates of progress are improving in science, although students continue to make less progress in science than in English and mathematics.

Lessons were observed during the school's themed diversity week. The progress that students made in lessons and the progress that could be seen in their workbooks, varied considerably. Students made good or better progress in only one third of the lessons observed, which leaves room for further improvement.

Teachers are now using progress data more effectively to identify students' individual needs. The most confident and competent teachers are helping students, particularly those with disabilities or special educational needs and those eligible for support through the pupil premium, to make good progress. However, in the majority of classes the tasks and expectations are the same for all students.

The attendance and achievement of students who are educated off site are now monitored effectively and any underachievement is addressed effectively.

## **The quality of teaching**

Students are firmly of the view that teaching has improved greatly since the school was placed in special measures. They say that teachers have higher expectations of their work and behaviour, and that the marking of their books has improved. They enjoy the wider range of activities and the opportunities they now have to discuss their work and collaborate in lessons. Students thought that they were now learning more effectively. They are more aware of their targets and how to meet them, although they thought that some teachers were better at explaining their progress to them than others. One girl commented that they were learning more because, 'We are now all working with the teachers, rather than against them.'

Although teachers are now collecting and analysing progress data more effectively, this is not always being used to plan lessons that meet the different needs of students. As a result some students find the work too challenging and others, too easy. Teachers appreciate the extensive range of opportunities they now have to access training to improve their teaching and learning. Unfortunately, they are hampered by the school's poor information and communication infrastructure and few have received training on how to use interactive whiteboard technology effectively.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students have a strong sense that the school is a happier and safer environment than was previously the case. One said that it was, 'a different school, and for the better'. They commented that teachers and students were more respectful of each other, that there is very little disruptive behaviour in lessons and that prejudice-based language and name calling had lessened. Students expressed the view that they and their teachers had zero-tolerance for racist language but that there was still some name calling related to students' appearance, size, gender and sexuality, although the great majority of teachers would challenge it if they heard it.

Good attitudes to learning were evident in almost all lessons with students demonstrating a keenness to learn. In lessons and around the school students are polite and respectful. Attendance has improved for all groups of students and fewer are persistently absent. Students feel that they have a voice in the school although they would like more opportunities to be consulted on teaching and learning. The students who met with inspectors said they felt safe in school and that they learn how to keep themselves safe as a result of personal, social, health and economic education and in assemblies.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The interim leadership has been highly effective in keeping the school on track towards removal from special measures. Teachers and students value the calm steer provided by the interim headteacher which has enabled them to develop confidence in their ability to move the school forward. Staff have enjoyed learning from good and outstanding practice in other schools and from the support provided by the subject leaders of education.

Middle leaders are more aware of their roles and responsibilities and more confident in how to access and use data to improve teaching and learning in their departments. They welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively and share good practice and have benefited from middle leadership training. Systems are in place to lead and manage teaching and

learning and, although relatively new, they are beginning to show a positive impact on students' learning. Middle leaders are more engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in their teams.

The school is about to experience further changes to leadership with the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher for September 2014. However, the governing body is well placed to provide strong and consistent leadership during this time of adjustment. Governors are a visible presence in the school and are well placed to bring their considerable expertise, enthusiasm, support and challenge to the new leadership. They have a good understanding of the financial position of the school and have sound plans to reduce the deficit.

Safeguarding is much improved. The safeguarding team use effective recording systems and processes which are well monitored by governors. Policies are in place but need to be integrated to ensure that all areas are fully covered and easily accessible. The school is aware of the need to map how health, safety and safeguarding issues are covered in the curriculum.

### **External support**

The local authority and archdiocese have brokered a great deal of support for the school during the interim period before the substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher take up their posts in September 2014. This includes the support of a senior adviser from the local authority; a business manager from another school; a vulnerable groups and safeguarding manager; and a finance officer. The local authority has also helped to fund and broker support from national and subject leaders of education. Teachers and managers are very positive about the impact this support has had on their understanding of the use of data and how this informs their teaching. The archdiocese has provided the support of an archdiocesan adviser and a building and development officer, and brokered the secondment of the interim headteacher from an outstanding archdiocesan school. Support from good and outstanding local schools, who have welcomed staff from St Gregory's into their classrooms to observe good practice, has been described as 'invaluable' by many of the participating teachers.