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29 April 2015

Mr Paul Heitzman  
Headteacher  
St Gregory's Catholic High School  
Cromwell Avenue  
Westbrook  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA5 1HG

Dear Mr Heitzman

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Gregory's Catholic High School, Warrington**

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that information for senior leaders and governors is used to consistently follow up, evaluate and record the impact of actions being taken
- continue to increase the consistency of the quality of marking.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher, the heads of department for English and mathematics, a group of nine students, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and a

representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated documents, including the school development plan, the school's record of self-evaluation, examples of records of leaders' discussions about subject departments' work, summaries of students' achievement, records of the governors' work and the local authority's work with the school. I examined samples of students' work. I undertook a tour to see the school at work, accompanied by the deputy headteacher.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the Head of Design Technology has left the school and been replaced. The curriculum has been reviewed and a budget plan which ensures that a previous deficit is resolved have been put in place.

## **Main findings**

You and your senior leaders have continued to build the recent improvement of the school. Together, you form a coherent team. The leadership systems of the school are increasingly secure. Similarly the effective models of trust and accountability established by senior leaders are now being extended to middle leaders. Staff morale is good. Leaders and teachers share a positive vision for the school and determination for it to continue its rapid improvement.

The school development plan is well structured and provides an effective framework for improvement. While senior leaders and governors check progress against this plan, this is not indicated on all the copies being used. There is a well-established cycle of monitoring, review and evaluation which involves senior and middle leaders and other teachers. The data this provides on student's individual achievement are used to target extra teaching for students who are at risk of falling behind. This has a particular impact for disadvantaged students supported by the additional pupil premium funding. The school's own data indicate that achievement in English and mathematics is rising with students generally making more progress than the national average. Furthermore, the gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others are less for current Year 11 students than for their peers last year. The gaps are narrowing even more for students in Year 10.

The quality of teaching has improved. I saw students working hard in response to teachers using a variety of teaching approaches. The teachers had matched their work to the needs of their classes. The students I talked with felt that good teaching is one of the school's strengths. Students' enthusiasm and confidence in their teachers contributes to their good behaviour. School leaders have ensured that there is frequent training to allow teachers to develop their teaching skills. Students' books show that marking has improved although inconsistency remains. Leaders are already responding to this as an improvement priority.

Governance is a strength of the school. Governors' skills and experience are well-matched to the school's needs. They understand its work well and celebrate its successes. Senior leaders work closely with the governing body. This allows governors to provide strong support and detailed challenge. Governors monitor developing aspects to ensure that improvement stays on track. This has ensured that governors are very knowledgeable about important aspects, for example, safeguarding. However, governors could further enhance their work by ensuring that all key improvement areas are followed up to the same depth. Governors have worked in close partnership with the headteacher and school's director of finance to provide resources to support the school's continuing work and further improvement.

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

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide effective support and challenge although this is being reduced as the less effective aspects of the school are resolved. The local authority has organised additional support through Great Sankey Teaching School Alliance and monitors this to ensure it stays on track. A joint review of the school's work to support students with special educational needs is in progress; its outcomes remain to be finalised. The school also works in partnership with the Innovation Enterprise Alliance linked to Wade Deacon High School.

School leaders have worked with the archdiocese to identify and visit schools with highly effective practice. The archdiocese also provides training for leaders and other teachers.

The headteacher works closely with the headteachers of other secondary schools in Warrington, for example, in sharing the school's effective approaches to safeguarding students and in joint review work in 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 Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**