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Mr David Lewis

Headteacher

St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and Sixth Form College: With Communication and Interaction Resource

Cutsyke Road

Pontefract

West Yorkshire

WF7 6BD

Dear Mr Lewis

**No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and Sixth Form College: With Communication and Interaction Resource**

Following my visit with Phil Smith Her Majesty's Inspector to your academy on 2 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The inspection also focused on relevant aspects of the quality of leadership and management (including governance) at the academy.

**Evidence**

Inspectors met with the acting headteacher and other senior leaders; members of staff who have a responsibility for raising the achievement of disadvantaged students; the designated teacher for looked after children; the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors; and groups of students. Inspectors also scrutinised documents relating to the achievement, attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged students. In addition, inspectors looked at records of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Short visits were made to a number of lessons in which inspectors talked to some students and sampled some of their books.

## **Context**

Since the school was last inspected it has become an academy within the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust. A new headteacher has led the academy since April 2014. During this inspection, the headteacher and a deputy headteacher were absent and the academy is currently being led by a second deputy headteacher. Over recent years the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals has risen slightly but remains below the national average. The proportion of disabled students or those that have special educational needs is average.

## **Main findings**

The inspectors' main focus was to evaluate the quality of the academy's provision for disadvantaged students. In 2012 and particularly in 2013, examination results showed gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students in the academy were much wider than seen nationally. In 2013 for example, disadvantaged students attained around one and a half GCSE grades fewer in English and more than two GCSE grades fewer in mathematics than other students in the academy. This issue was recognised by governors who began challenging leaders to narrow gaps. Since his appointment, the new headteacher has brought greater impetus to tackling the barriers that caused disadvantaged students to make slower progress than their peers and in 2014 gaps in attainment narrowed markedly. This was most evident in English, where additional support for disadvantaged students, particularly focused on ensuring controlled assessments were completed to a high standard, paid dividends. Last year, disadvantaged students attained around half a GCSE grade in English fewer than other pupils in the academy. Progress in narrowing gaps in mathematics was slower, although the gap did close to just over a GCSE grade. Last year, all the disadvantaged students in Year 11 secured places in further education or an apprenticeship, although relatively few disadvantaged students began A level courses in the sixth form.

The headteacher has raised expectations and set more demanding targets for the progress of all students. He has focused on tackling inconsistencies between the performance of departments and differences in the attainment of different groups of students. Senior leaders use the school's sophisticated tracking of students' progress effectively. Analysis of the progress made by different groups, including disadvantaged students, is rigorous and is used effectively to hold teachers to account. All members of staff know who the disadvantaged students are and know their pay progression is dependent upon students making the required progress towards their targets. For some departments, this has led to significant challenge and much closer monitoring by senior leaders.

Students arrive at the academy from over 50 different feeder schools. Consequently, it is difficult for the academy to have well-developed links with all feeder primaries. Nevertheless, school leaders have effective systems in place to gather information on students' abilities in reading, writing and mathematics, and use additional information from tests and teacher assessments to plan an appropriate curriculum.

Lower attaining Year 7 and 8 students are withdrawn from languages lessons to receive additional teaching in literacy and numeracy designed to address gaps in their knowledge. Inspectors observed some effective pre-teaching of skills in a literacy lesson that helped students prepare for a new piece of work they would begin in English lessons later in the week. Some disadvantaged students told inspectors they had found these lessons helpful. In addition, the academy checks the reading skills of students when they transfer from primary school and some students receive intensive reading support through which they make rapid gains.

Better ongoing analysis of students' progress now means those students making slower progress are quickly identified and additional support is provided earlier. The academy has a wide range of different support programmes. A programme of peer mentoring has been introduced in which older students provide one-to-one support for younger students. In addition, senior members of staff provide mentoring support, particularly for underachieving boys and disadvantaged students in Key Stage 4. An evaluation of this support showed a positive impact last year, with a number of students attaining GCSE results above their target grade.

The academy's tracking of students currently in Year 11 shows the gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students is expected to narrow further this year. However, despite this expected improvement, the gap is expected to remain similar to the gap found nationally. The small number of looked after children in the academy and those students in the speech and language resource are making good progress and receive good support. Disadvantaged students in the sixth form are also making good progress and are on course to attain good or outstanding results. They receive good pastoral support that, in some cases, has helped students overcome considerable barriers to studying. Some disadvantaged sixth form students told inspectors they would like the academy to work more closely with their parents who have no experience of supporting university applications. School leaders, including governors, recognise more needs to be done to increase the progress of disadvantaged students, particularly at Key Stage 3, so that gaps in attainment continue to narrow further.

In 2013-14, the attendance of disadvantaged students in the academy was similar to that of disadvantaged students nationally, although the proportion that missed school regularly was higher than seen nationally. This has improved slightly this year, but remains similar to the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged students that receive fixed-term exclusions for poor behaviour has been relatively high, but has also reduced this year. Students who are repeatedly excluded are placed on behaviour support plans which are monitored by learning mentors. Some students receive effective behaviour support from local authority colleagues. Information on attendance and behaviour provided to governors is less sophisticated and is not broken down by student groups. Consequently, governors are less able to challenge senior leaders effectively.

## **External support**

Since becoming an academy, external scrutiny from other headteachers of academies within the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust and beyond has been undertaken. This has helped the academy sharpen its own scrutiny of the performance of different departments. The trust has very recently taken steps to appoint a development officer who will provide ongoing challenge and support to the academy in the future.

## **The strengths in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- The headteacher and the governors have raised expectations and focused all members of staff on the progress different groups of students make. Tracking systems provide sufficiently detailed analyses to hold every teacher and middle leader to account. As a result, everyone is aware of the progress disadvantaged students are making and increasingly tailor their teaching and the additional support they provide to meet students' needs.
- Some departments, most notably English, have increased the rate of progress disadvantaged students make and gaps between their attainment and that of other students have narrowed considerably.
- Good pastoral support is helping disadvantaged students in the sixth form achieve good and outstanding examination results.

## **The weaknesses in the school's approaches to supporting its disadvantaged pupils effectively to achieve their potential are:**

- Tracking and analysis of the attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged students has not been sufficiently rigorous. As a result, the number of learning days lost through absence or exclusion remains a barrier to some disadvantaged students achieving their potential.
- Departmental development plans do not focus sufficiently on actions to increase rates of progress for disadvantaged students at Key Stage 3.
- Nearly two thirds of the disadvantaged students who enter the academy in Year 7 attain expected or higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2. Despite this, less than a third go on to study A-levels. Leaders have recognised they need to do more to challenge the aspirations of disadvantaged families. Some disadvantaged students and their parents are now offered trips to universities to raise their awareness of the possibilities of higher education, although more needs to be done to involve harder-to-reach families.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the overall attendance of disadvantaged students and, in particular, the attendance of those that are absent regularly. In addition, further reduce fixed-term exclusions of disadvantaged students. Ensure governors receive sufficiently detailed attendance and behaviour reports across the year so that they can challenge leaders, where necessary.
- Learn from and disseminate the emerging good practice that is developing in departments where disadvantaged students are making better progress and attainment gaps are narrowing.
- Increase the proportion of more-able disadvantaged students progressing onto A level qualifications in the sixth form and on to university courses, through further engagement with disadvantaged families.

I am copying this letter to the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield, the Chair of the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust, the Secretary of State for Education and the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**