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Ms C Bacon
The Headteacher
St Paul's Catholic College
The Ridings
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Dear Ms Bacon

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Paul's Catholic College

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with an additional inspector on 13 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your students, staff, the Chair of Governors and the school improvement adviser who gave us good insight into life in school.

Since the last inspection, there have been a significant number of staff changes. Almost one third of the teaching staff are new, including a new coordinator for special educational needs and head of Year 11. One of the school's deputy headteachers was appointed as the substantive headteacher from 1 September 2011. There are currently two vacancies at senior leadership level. A new Chair of Governors has been appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 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 good progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Students' attainment in 2010 represented a significant increase compared to previous years. This upward trend, although by a smaller proportion, continued in 2011, so that attainment in English by the end of Year 11 is now above the national average and around the national average in mathematics. Overall achievement for



most students was satisfactory; however, a minority of students did not make the expected progress. In particular, for a third of middle attaining students in mathematics and a small minority of higher attainers in both English and mathematics, achievement was inadequate. Rapid action has been taken to address this and the lower performance in physical education and drama. Improved assessment systems are ensuring that senior and middle leaders monitor students' progress by both subject and year group so that any underachievement is identified earlier and tackled effectively. This, together with better quality teaching, is leading to improved and more consistent progress by all students, including those in the sixth form whose attainment has also risen since the last inspection. Inspection evidence suggests that the significant rise in attainment seen in 2010 is set to occur again in 2012. Additional training for teachers is resulting in better support for students who are learning to speak English as an additional language so that their progress is being accelerated.

Lesson observations and school monitoring records indicate that the large majority of teaching is now good or better. Comments from students support this, saying that there are more practical learning activities in lessons and that better use is made of time. Other features of good teaching include: good relationships between staff and students, teachers' strong subject and examination criteria knowledge; a good variety of teaching approaches; an appropriate balance of whole class, individual and small group work; and, effective questioning. Consequently, learning is accelerating and students are developing independence and self-confidence across the curriculum because they are being challenged and provided with good opportunities to be actively involved in their learning. Lesson planning has improved and there is now consistent practice across the school. Teachers are using assessment information more effectively to structure learning and to identify how they will meet the differing needs of groups and individual students within their classes. However, the pace of learning slows when lessons are too teacher led and the questioning or planned tasks and activities are not effectively tailored or provide sufficient challenge.

The consistency and quality of written feedback to help students has improved. All teachers are now following the school's marking expectations of identifying 'what went well' and 'even better if' when marking students' work. In many subjects, students reflect on their own progress and set personal learning targets for improvement. Consequently, most students now know where they are in relation to their targets and are increasingly able to say, with precision, how they will improve their work and achieve or exceed their targets.

The good capacity of leaders and managers for further improvement identified at the last inspection, despite the significant changes to staff, is being satisfactorily sustained. The new headteacher is providing clear vision and direction to the school, and has further raised the profile of teaching and learning and the link to raising student achievement. She is effectively distributing leadership at both senior and middle level to achieve this. All members of the senior leadership team take responsibility for different aspects of teaching and learning. They all share in the monitoring of its quality and lead small 'project groups' composed of both middle



leaders and teachers, for example, to improve students' independent learning skills. Good practice is being shared routinely both at whole-school and department level. More refined monitoring of teaching and students' learning is enabling senior staff to target further professional development for all as well as individuals. These, together with the improvements already achieved in the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievement, are beginning to accelerate the rate of improvement. In turn, this is fostering the increasingly positive culture for learning across the school which is transferring to students whose attitudes to learning have also improved.

The school is fully aware of its strengths and the areas needing improvement. Targets are significantly more challenging and being effectively used to raise aspirations across the school of what students can achieve. Leaders at all levels are moving away from the focus of raising attainment to the progress being made by individuals and groups of students. Pastoral and subject leaders are increasingly being held to account for student outcomes in their areas of responsibility. The school makes appropriate use of local authority support to meet their development needs and is starting to make links with other schools to learn about excellent practice first hand.

The technology specialism is impacting well across the school. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in the specialist subjects of information and communication technology (ICT) and science are above national averages. Good use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning across the school by senior leaders, teachers and students.

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

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010.

- Build upon the very best practice in the college to develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that at least 75% of teaching is good or better by July 2011.
- Embed the use of assessment data more robustly across the college so that:
 - all teachers use assessment information more effectively in planning learning to secure good or better progress for all students
 - the consistent day-to-day use of assessment information ensures that lessons vary the pace of learning for groups of students, include different tasks for more able and less able students, and use a variety of resources adapted to suit different learning needs
 - all teachers provide high-quality written feedback to help students know how to meet their targets and how to continually improve their work.