



HOLY CROSS COLLEGE ~ Continuing Quality Improvement & Progress

Like a number educational institutions in Bury, Holy Cross had been Ofsted Outstanding for a decade before 2017. This reflected the high numbers of students (over 50%) getting A*, A or B at A level, the huge number (85% plus) progressing successfully to university (including Oxbridge, Russell Group and Medical courses) and the excellent pastoral care and enrichment (including Music, Drama, Art and Sport).

Early in 2017, however, I alerted Bury Heads to a changing emphasis in Ofsted's approach - 'Good was the new Outstanding' - with a much stronger focus on 'Value Added'. This places greater weight on the progress of students. Some Bury schools had high percentages of students gaining good GCSEs – perhaps what parents were seeking – but low 'progress' scores (i.e. the students were coming in from with good SAT scores, and getting good GCSE grades – as expected – but not better than expected.)

Holy Cross at that time similarly had 'Satisfactory' progress measures (i.e. the students were coming in with good GCSEs and getting good A Level grades – as expected – but not better than expected.) Ofsted then came in 2017 and judged the College (on 2016 results) as requiring improvement, stating that 'Satisfactory progress was no longer deemed sufficient'. So we set in place a strategy not only to maintain our high grades, high university success and all the other things, but to work towards 'Very Good' progress as well. This was in fact rapidly achieved, with the Alps progress scores showing:

<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
5- (Satisfactory)	5+ (Good)	3 (Excellent)

Then Ofsted returned, awarding us a very strong 'Good' in inspection in 2018 as a result of this rapid improvement in progress, added to the continuing success in all the other things the College is known for, such as A level high grades, progression to university, pastoral care and enrichment, as described above. (2019 results have maintained this 'Very Good' level of progress, while doubling Oxbridge admissions, increasing A* grades etc.)

How was this significant level of improvement achieved and maintained? By a very strong quality improvement planning focussing on the following 6 elements:

- (1) Strong monitoring of Progress/Value Added scores at a teacher, class and subject level: every teacher was trained to monitor the Progress Score for every key assessment and exam (using the Alps system) - it was not just left to senior and middle management. Governors trained too.
- (2) Relentless focus on improving Teaching Learning and Assessment, through Observations and Investment in CPD
- (3) Good use of collaboration with other institutions, to share excellent practice.
- (4) Strong Performance Management based on Teaching Standards
- (5) Ensuring teaching time was maximised, reducing intrusions into teaching, revising timetable
- (6) High visibility, drive and constant insistence on high standards across College.

There was, in other words, no magic bullet. What was needed was focus on progress and the staples of teaching and learning – and a willingness to learn from and work with others to improve. The rewards are great: the College is now not only known for high achievement but also for very strong progress. Recruitment has surged forward, and finances are very strong.