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Joe Richardson
Interim Principal
Thomas Becket Catholic School
Becket Way
Kettering Road North
Northampton
NN3 6HT

Dear Mr Richardson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Thomas Becket Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 16 July 2013, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, and a group of colleagues who are participating in the Teach First and Graduate Teacher Programmes. I also met with four members of the governing body, the Diocesan Commissioner for Schools and a representative of the local authority. I visited a small number of lessons to observe the quality of teaching, accompanied by two members of the senior leadership team. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed with effect from September 2013. The previous governing body has been dissolved, and a new

federated governing body has been in operation since 1 June 2013. Plans to strengthen the capacity of the senior leadership team by reallocating roles and responsibilities have been agreed, and come into effect in September 2013. Two teachers of mathematics have left the school. Discussions are taking place between the Diocese and the Department for Education about the possibility of the school becoming an academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and other senior leaders have responded positively to the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. The improvement plan clearly identifies who is responsible for leading each aspect of improvement, how you intend to measure for success and how often you will measure for progress against the plan. You have set yourselves challenging targets with a view to being removed from special measures by September 2014.

Your decisive action to tackle weak teaching by supporting and challenging those teachers whose practice is either inadequate or in need of improvement, has started to increase the proportion of more effective teaching in the school. This has been externally validated by a local authority review. You have rightly identified that these teachers require coaching, and my scrutiny of teachers' lesson plans and students' books demonstrates a greater awareness from teachers of the need to match the work in lessons to students' capabilities. Participants in the Teach First and Graduate Teacher programmes who met with me, told me they have been very well supported during the year. When I visited their lessons briefly, I witnessed teaching which engaged students' interest and encouraged them to think for themselves. Students now have an improved understanding of how their attitudes in lessons have a direct impact on how well they learn, and they spoke positively about the recently introduced 'learning recovery' system, which requires them to make amends with the teacher and make up lost ground if they misbehave in lessons. Consequently, they are less likely to display negative attitudes in the classroom. The effective support of an attendance consultant procured by the local authority has increased levels of attendance to around 94%.

The newly formed federated governing body is aware of the challenges the school faces to have special measures removed within the timescale. Effective plans are in place for members of the governing body to monitor the progress the school is making, and for holding school leaders to account. They welcome the support provided by the local authority in this regard.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.
The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Apart from the four participants in the Teach First and Graduate Teacher programmes, the school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire and the Diocese. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector