

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 679 9167
Direct email: farhan.aslam@serco.com



19 June 2015

Mr Aiden Bannon
Headteacher
Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College
Oakley Road
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 0AX

Dear Mr Bannon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College

Following my visit with Roger Whittall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17–18 June 2015, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. However, this applies only to the newly qualified teachers we discussed, all of whom are current members of staff at the school. No further appointments can be made before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of appropriate authority for Holy Trinity Catholic Media Arts College
cc. Peter Hay Director of Children's Services for Birmingham

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate students' progress, by:
 - ensuring leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching informed by the rates of students' progress
 - making more effective use of accurate and well-timed assessment to inform teachers' expectations of what students can achieve so that aspirational targets are set
 - ensuring that teachers plan and set work that is always well matched to what students already know and understand
 - sharing good practice in questioning more effectively so that all teachers challenge students to develop their ideas and responses more carefully
 - improving the application of the school's marking policy so that students always know what they have done well and what they need to do next to improve further.

- Improve achievement significantly, especially at Key Stage 3 in English and mathematics, so that all students and groups of students make at least the progress they should, by ensuring that:
 - progress is monitored carefully from Year 7 onwards so that underperformance is identified rapidly and actions are well targeted to address gaps in students' knowledge and understanding
 - the most-able students are provided with appropriate opportunities to reach their full potential and that their progress is monitored regularly, so that more of these students achieve the highest grades.

- Take rapid action to improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - communication in the school is improved as a matter of urgency so that staff at all levels are able to confidently play their part in securing the required improvements
 - roles and responsibilities are well matched to the strengths and abilities of senior leaders
 - effective systems are in place to enable accurate monitoring of progress for all students and groups of students, including the most able, and that actions taken are accurately evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis
 - the way in which the pupil premium funding is used is evaluated so that it has a greater and more sustained impact on closing the gaps between these students and others in the school
 - subject leaders are supported to understand and carry out their responsibility to monitor the progress of all students and groups of students from Year 7 onwards and to take appropriate steps where underperformance is identified
 - the governing body improves their understanding of information about

students' achievement so that they are more rigorous in holding school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and achievement.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17–18 June 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher of Handsworth Wood Girls' Academy, who is providing support for the school. Inspectors spoke to students during break times and lunchtimes, and in classrooms, and met formally with groups of students. Inspectors visited lessons and scrutinised school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, checks made on the quality of teaching and records of students' achievement. Inspectors also took into account findings from the Ofsted staff questionnaire that was distributed to staff.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in March, four members of staff have left the school, including two members of the leadership team.

A number of new staff have joined the school. A deputy headteacher who has responsibility for the curriculum and assessment has been seconded from another school until the end of the next academic year. A head of transition, second in charge of religious education and a pastoral and progress leader have been appointed. A school chaplain and curriculum support assistant have also joined the staff. In addition, a member of staff has joined the leadership team as an associate assistant headteacher who has responsibility for 'closing the gaps' and a teacher has taken up a post with responsibility for able, gifted and talented students.

There will be 16 staff departing at the end of the academic year. All key vacant posts been replaced with substantive teachers. Three members of staff remain on long-term sick leave.

The local authority submitted an application for permission to remove the governing body and put in its place an interim executive board on 4 June 2015.

Achievement of students at the school

Achievement is showing some signs of improvement at Key Stage 3, but remains too variable within subjects, between subjects, and between different groups of students. The school's records show that weaknesses persist in the progress rates of students in English in Year 8 and in mathematics in Year 9. There are also some substantial weaknesses in the progress students are making in some foundation subjects, particularly in history, geography, religious education, design and technology, and information technology. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making poor progress in some year groups in

mathematics, and the most-able students are underachieving in science, the humanities and in design and technology.

Considerable additional catch-up work has had to take place for students in the current Year 11 in the approach to their examinations. Students have attended additional lessons before and after school, during weekends and during holidays. Participation rates at these sessions have been high. This action has been necessary because students have not made the progress that they should have done over time. Although this work appears to be having an impact, this is an unsustainable model of raising students' achievement.

Teachers' predictions for examination results for the current Year 11 show that improvements are expected in key headline measures. However, this information also indicates that gaps between some groups of students are widening considerably. The progress rates of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged students in English and mathematics look to be rising, but at a much slower rate than that of others in school. Likewise, boys are expected to achieve less well than girls in mathematics. These gaps are a significant barrier to securing good achievement.

Across subjects, students' achievement varies. Positive attainment in areas such as history is offset by weaker attainment in information technology and art. Predictions in product design are worryingly low and reflect on-going poor achievement in this subject. Leaders are beginning to address this.

Although some external checks of the accuracy of teachers' assessments in English and mathematics at Key Stage 3 have taken place, these checks have not yet been far-reaching enough. There has been no external quality assurance of Key Stage 4 teachers' assessments or coverage of subject areas outside of English and mathematics. Given inaccuracies in teachers' predictions last year, this means that until the GCSE results are published in the summer, this information cannot be judged as robust.

The quality of teaching

Teaching remains inconsistent. Too much continues to inhibit students from achieving as well as they should. However, there is growing evidence that teachers are embedding aspects of practice from the training they have undertaken. As a result, some teaching is having a better impact on students' learning.

The school's assessment policy is now followed with greater rigour. Many teachers offer students clear written guidance that tells them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Students are routinely given time to improve their work based on this information. Likewise, students are also given time in lessons to reflect on and review their learning. These practices, known as 'DIRT' and 'CREAM',

positively support students' progress because students are encouraged to think about their learning and address any gaps in their understanding. Students articulated to inspectors how they benefited from this. In some cases, however, students felt that the guidance that their teachers offered them was too generic and not personalised enough.

Teachers now have an improved understanding of how well their students should be doing and how well their students are performing in relation to their targets. Teachers use the information they have available about their students to give more careful consideration to how best to seat and group the students in their classes in order support their learning. As a result of better assessment and tracking systems, teachers are able to identify students who are underachieving more quickly than they have done in the past. They produce 'intervention plans' to tackle underachievement and put strategies in place to accelerate the progress of these students. It is too early to fully gauge the impact of this work.

Many teachers share 'success criteria' with their students that reflect different levels of challenge and make it clear what students need to do to achieve well in their work. This has made teachers more aware that the students in their classes have different abilities and that these need to be considered. Some students articulated to inspectors how this helped to motivate them to achieve more in their lessons. However, teachers do not yet take into account students' different abilities and learning needs well enough in their planning of activities. Where teaching is weakest, it is characterised by low levels of challenge, low expectations and poor consideration of the specific needs of students. The work set can be too hard for some students, or too easy for the most able. Consequently, some students do not make the progress that they should. Work is also not well adapted to suit the individual learning needs of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. There has been a deficit of training in this area. Teachers' lack of these skills has had a substantial impact on the progress over time of some groups of students.

Some teachers use questioning increasingly well to check and extend students' learning. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 history lesson, in which the teachers asked challenging questions and gave students time to think before responding. This helped them to think more deeply about their learning. Similarly, in a Year 7 English lesson, the teacher insisted that students extended the responses they gave to questions and provided reasons to support their answers. This ensured that students acquired a secure understanding of what features they could use to improve the stories they had written. However, in too many lessons, questioning does not probe or challenge students' learning well enough to enable them to make quick progress.

Short-term temporary teaching appointments have been a contributory factor in the variable quality of teaching. A greater proportion of full-time teaching staff in the

coming academic year offers greater potential for leaders to embed sustainable improvements in the quality of teaching over time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In lessons where teaching is strong, many students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Students are often attentive, listen to their teachers' explanations, respond quickly to instructions and get on well with their work. When work is not well matched to students' capabilities or the work set is not made interesting enough, some students stray off task and engage in low-level disruption. Inspectors found little evidence of high levels of engagement or of students' enthusiasm for learning. This contrasts with leaders' views of behaviour, which are more positive.

Students are polite, well mannered and courteous. They conduct themselves well at informal times of the day. Movement between lessons is generally calm and orderly, and students arrive punctually to their lessons. The overwhelming majority of students spoken to said that bullying was rare. They felt safe at school and were taught about a wide range of risks that helped them to understand how to keep themselves safe. Students also said that they were taught how to respect and tolerate each other.

The school has some effective behaviour and inclusion systems. These systems are supporting the needs of those students who present challenging behaviour and some students who have been identified as vulnerable or at risk. As a result of improved systems, the number of exclusions is reducing. Attendance has also improved. A family support worker is now engaging with increasing success with families to improve the attendance of students who are regularly absent from school, including disadvantaged students. Leaders do not evaluate the range of information that they gather about students' behaviour well enough to know the impact of their actions. They therefore do not know what strategies are most effective at bringing about improvements. Some students said that, although the behaviour policy was contributing to some improvements in behaviour, it is not applied consistently by all staff.

The safeguarding policy and procedures are known by staff. Some omissions of dates of checks from the single central register were rectified during the inspection. Records and discussion with members of staff show that staff have undertaken appropriate training and have been issued with relevant statutory guidance. Leaders need to ensure that the records that they have of all staff training are brought together in a more coherent form. Due regard is given, through staff training and regular safeguarding updates, to a broad range of risks that students may encounter so that staff are vigilant to these.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Systems for tracking students' progress across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have been considerably strengthened. Training has been delivered so that leaders and teachers at all levels now have a shared and better understanding of these systems. This information is increasingly used by leaders, including subject leaders, to hold teachers to account for the progress of the students that they teach across the year groups. Plans are in place to increase the number of points at which teachers' assessments are captured to enable closer monitoring.

The senior leadership team has been further restructured so that their roles are better aligned to school improvement priorities and to give greater clarity in their accountability for these. The appointment of a leader who oversees the achievement of disadvantaged students has been a sensible move, and the pace of improvements in this area is quickening. Likewise, the secondment of a deputy headteacher to oversee curriculum and assessment has lent further strength to the team. The members of the senior leadership team are increasingly confident in their understanding of their areas of responsibility, clear on what they need to do to bring about improvements and are beginning to demonstrate the impact of some of their actions.

Middle leaders now have a clearer understanding of their crucial role in delivering school improvements. This is as a result of well-received training. They have adopted more systematic approaches to monitoring and evaluation. As a result, they understand better how well students are achieving in their subject areas and are increasingly checking the work of their teams. One subject leader described how they now felt that they had the 'tools to hold people to account'.

The staff training programme is valued by teachers. Regular checks are made of the quality of teaching and these checks are now more focused on the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress over time. Leaders use their monitoring to offer additional support for teachers who do not meet the required standard. However, there remains a lack of clarity in the way in which teaching is evaluated. Currently, the view of the quality of teaching held by the school conflicts with that of external reviews. This needs to be urgently resolved in order that all parties involved in the school improvement process share an unequivocal and accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school.

The external review of the pupil premium undertaken in March provides some helpful practical guidance to improve the deployment of this funding. Those who undertook this review plan further visits to the school so that leaders can continue to learn from the good practice of others. The school has produced a range of materials in response to the review, including a revised policy and action plan. Some aspects of the policy are too vague and greater clarity is needed in relation to monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Current evaluations of the progress of

disadvantaged students are overgenerous. Insufficient focus has been placed on the attainment of these students in relation to other students nationally. Consequently, some targets set for improvement in the action plan are not ambitious enough. There are appropriate plans in place to make staff who are employed through pupil premium funding more accountable for improving the outcomes of disadvantaged students through more specific performance management targets.

The majority of staff questionnaires returned to inspectors are supportive of the continued work of the school. A number of comments offered communicate the improvements that the school has made since the previous inspection. However, a minority of staff continue to express dissatisfaction and concerns about their lack of trust in school leaders.

The external review of governance undertaken in March confirms the findings of the previous inspection report. Governors' progress on tackling the issues identified in this review and in addressing their training needs has been stalled due to uncertainty as the local authority's application to put in place an interim executive board has been progressed. Governors have continued to perform their statutory duties, and recent records of meetings have evidenced a greater degree of challenge in the questions they ask leaders. However, the lack of training means that governors continue to lack the skills to hold leaders to account. The replacement of the current governing body with an interim executive board will provide a suitable, if slow, resolution to this.

External support

The local authority, through the 'monitoring task force' provides high levels of accountability and challenge to the headteacher and to leaders of the school. The task force asks probing questions about the quality and robustness of evidence that leaders present. This is beginning to sharpen aspects of the school's evaluation. The monitoring task force also challenges the pace and impact of leaders' actions. However, it is clear from the records of these meetings that school leaders, particularly the headteacher, need to acknowledge areas of weaknesses more explicitly. This openness and transparency of communication is vital to the school moving forward.

Valuable support has been provided from Handsworth Wood Girls' Academy, particularly from the headteacher. This support has resulted in greater clarity in the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders, training that has improved the skills of middle leaders and some checking of teachers' assessments. The school improvement plan now recognises the need for this external support at all stages in order to continue to build the capacity for sustained improvements.