

Tribal
1–4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

18 April 2013

Mrs Kim Stoner
Interim Executive Principal
St Edmund's Catholic School
Old Charlton Road
Dover
Kent
CT16 2QB

Dear Mrs Stoner

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Edmund's Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 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 January 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Interim Executive Principal, senior staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, representatives of the local authority, representatives of St Thomas More RC School, and a group of students. The inspector also toured the school during lesson time and considered school documentation. The local authority's statement of action and the school's plans for improvement were evaluated.

Context

The Interim Executive Principal, supported by other senior staff from a local school, collectively known as 'Team 26', has continued to lead St Edmund's since the inspection. During the summer, it is planned that the leadership will transfer for the long term to a senior team from St Thomas More RC School, Greenwich, who are linked to the school as part of the Southwark Diocese, which has responsibility for

the school. Very recently, the local authority has replaced the governing body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB).

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The Interim Executive Principal, and her senior colleagues in Team 26, provide very positive and energetic leadership. They expertly assessed what was needed and have begun to put in place structures and systems which work for the school. They communicate with staff candidly and sympathetically. This has galvanised the commitment of most staff very quickly. Staff know much more clearly what is expected of them and how they are supported. Expectations of what the students can achieve have risen, as shown in the school's demanding but realistic targets. Morale has improved and the school has made remarkable progress in a short time.

In several key areas, the school is already better than was reported at the January inspection. Senior staff have observed all teachers teaching and have clear evidence that the quality of lessons is showing improvement. Teachers ensure more consistently that students know what they are expected to learn in each lesson, for example. There are now much better systems for assessing how well students are doing, but there is more work to do to ensure these assessments are fully reliable. Training and coaching for staff are carefully focused. Computer provision for students is much better. Sensible improvements in the curriculum have been started, along with consideration of future priorities for the sixth form. The school buildings and grounds have been brightened up very considerably and made increasingly fit for purpose, although the buildings are still shabby in many places. The rate of exclusion has fallen notably, with better use of internal and external support for vulnerable students.

Students have noticed the improvements and are very hopeful of a better future. The students who met with the inspector are particularly pleased that they are listened to by senior staff. They are very clear that Team 26 has their interests firmly at heart.

The IEB is very new, formed in the same week as this monitoring inspection, and has not yet impacted significantly on the progress of the school. However, its members have a wide range of valuable experience. The new chair is already asking good questions and is ensuring that appropriate administration processes are in place. He is building constructive and robust relationships with key people.

All of these very positive changes are at an early stage. There remains much more to do. The new leadership team coming in from St Thomas More RC School know it will be challenging to sustain and build on the progress so far. They have just

started to develop a new plan for improving the school, with a focus on rapidly improving the quality of teaching.

Before the school was made subject to special measures, the local authority (LA) issued a warning notice which told the school it must improve, and brought in Team 26 to help it to do so. Since the school entered special measures, the LA's work in the school continues to be very good. It has provided some additional, well-targeted financial support. Experienced and knowledgeable LA officers have planned carefully for the school's future leadership, and the possibility of adopting Academy status, working appropriately with the Diocese. A national leader for education, from another Kent school, supports St Edmund's, helping to pave the way forward.

The LA shrewdly plans to review (inspect) the school itself in the summer to provide information to the new leadership team, and to record the position of the school when the new leadership team starts. This means that the school's progress under that team can be measured from then. Rightly, the LA is updating its own planning to show how it will support the school, and hold it to account, under the new leadership.

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.

The school may appoint up to five newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Director of Education for Southwark Catholic Diocese, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector