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7 June 2013

Mr Ejiro Ughwujabo
St Mary's Catholic High School
Woburn Road
Croydon
CR9 2EE

Dear Mr Ughwujabo

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Catholic High School

Following my visit to your school on 5 June, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. I also held a meeting with a representative from the local authority, the Archdiocese of Southwark and a National Leader in Education supporting the school. I evaluated the school improvement plans and related documentation. I also carried out a tour of the school with you, to see it at work.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing since the last inspection.

Main findings

You, the senior leaders and governors have responded constructively to the findings of the last inspection. You know you have a lot to do to be a good school but have made a positive start. In response to the inspection recommendations, you have developed short-term action plans to tackle all the identified areas for development.

These have a monitoring schedule, but success criteria are not always quantified. You and the governors have yet to target a time frame or longer-term plan for the school to become good. However, subject leaders report the changes implemented as a result of the school's action planning, including a more structured approach to school improvement, have helped them improve their effectiveness. A firm expectation has been established that marking is for purpose and students act on suggestions for improvement. Regular scrutiny of marking has ensured this is now seen in the majority of teachers' work.

You and senior leaders have changed target setting practice to ensure that it is challenging for all students. This has raised expectations for staff and students. Weekly subject development time is being used to enable staff review the taught curriculum and share best teaching practice. This has improved the quantity of good and better teaching and has increased the lesson challenge for all groups of students. However, you and the senior leaders are aware that there is still too much teaching requiring improvement.

Leaders' increased monitoring of their own subjects and regular sharing of departmental practice with other subject leaders has led to a more incisive understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their own curriculum areas. Senior leaders and governors are very aware that they need to reduce the variation in subject outcomes for students and boost rates of progress of all student groups. The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through a programme of regular visits. Governors recognise that they could be even more effective by focusing incisively on the progress that students are making.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- develop a clear shared understanding of when the school will get to be good and develop a monitoring programme to ensure that the school is on track for this aim
- involve governors fully in fulfilling their role as critical friend by ensuring they focus relentlessly on the progress being made by the different groups of students and hold leaders to account for them
- reduce remaining variation in student's achievement in different subjects.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school is working with a National Leader in Education arranged by the Archdiocese. The local authority has carried out regular reviews and organised consultant support for some departments including English, music and science. The school is working with closely 'Achievement for All' to improve the progress of students which is having a positive impact on achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Director of Children's Services for Croydon.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector