

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 9165
Direct email: Victoria.mortimore2@serco.com



11 September 2013

Mrs L Fahy
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic School
Earlsbury Gardens
Birchfield
Birmingham
B20 3AE

Dear Mrs Fahy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sacred Heart Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 2013, 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- monitor how widely and frequently pupils read and evaluate the impact this has on improving attainment in pupils' reading
- externally moderate the levels awarded by teachers for pupil attainment
- set challenging targets for the achievement of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, those pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and pupils who are more able and ensure that these targets are recorded on the school improvement plan
- clearly identify who has responsibility for specific monitoring systems and when these will take place.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you and other senior leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings were held with five members of the governing body including the Chair of Governors, six students from Years 5 and 6 and a representative of the local authority. You showed me around the school and we visited every class to see the pupils at work. I looked at a number of pupils' books. I evaluated the school improvement action plan. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's information about pupils' progress and attainment.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the inspection in June.

Main findings

Senior leaders have acted swiftly to improve teaching. Pupils are challenged more because teachers have higher expectations of what pupils should be achieving in lessons. A new marking policy is in place. The 'bubble' marking, where teachers write comments in speech bubbles, is helping teachers to become better at letting pupils know precisely what to do to improve their work. The pupils said that bubble marking was good as it helped them improve their work and told them about their level and target. Governors have looked at the work of pupils this term and they say that they can see an improvement in the feedback from teachers to pupils and in how the pupils act upon the advice given. Teachers know what the elements of good and outstanding teaching are because of the well-focused training they have received from senior leaders. Teachers are beginning to put some of these elements into practice. For example, pupils said that they now have more opportunities to work independently and to lead their own learning. Leaders have introduced reading, phonics, literacy and language programmes into the lessons. Lesson observations undertaken by leaders indicate that this is making a positive difference to pupils' communication skills and improving their spelling and writing. Leaders have increased the time for reading in lessons. However, the monitoring of how widely or frequently pupils read is not rigorous.

All teachers and leaders monitor the effect of teaching on pupil progress. Leaders have introduced 'working towards level' sheets which record the progress pupils make. The results are monitored by leaders and teachers and shared with parents. Pupils said that the assessment information on the sheets helps them better understand the next steps in their learning. Leaders have started to evaluate the effects improvements are having on pupils' learning and they have made a positive start on developing a process for tracking and analysing pupils' progress through the weekly pupil progress meetings. However, data provided by the school showed that teacher assessments were significantly higher than the levels achieved by pupils in the end of Key Stage 2 tests.

Actions in the new improvement plan are clear and appropriate. They address the areas requiring improvement identified by the inspection. However the plan does not show progress milestones for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium or more able pupils. Also, the dates by which monitoring activities will take place have not been set and it is unclear who will be responsible for the monitoring.

Governors said that they feel 'energised' by the recent changes and introduction of new strategies to support pupil progress. Governors continue to monitor the impact of new initiatives and say that they can see a definite improvement in the standard of pupils' work.

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 local authority provides effective support for the school. A new improvement adviser has started this term. The previous school improvement adviser and the local leader of education supported leaders in preparing the school self-evaluation and action plans. More support is planned for the future, including help with data analysis and lesson observations.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector