

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 6799163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com

22 January 2014

Mr Clive Mathew
Executive Headteacher
Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School
Colney Heath Lane
St Albans
AL4 0TT

Dear Mr Mathew

Special measures monitoring inspection of Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 21 January 2014, 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 October 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and members of your leadership team, six members of the governing body and the Interim Chair of the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust. I visited a number of lessons briefly, accompanied by an assistant headteacher, to look at the quality of teaching and marking of students' work. I evaluated the school's action plan and the Trust's statement of action

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have restructured the senior leadership team to add extra capacity. Your assistant headteachers now teach fewer lessons to allow them to be more strategic. You have changed the structure of the school day.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Your detailed school action plan clearly identifies how you plan to tackle most of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. It does not identify how you plan to consistently apply the new initiatives for using, analysing and acting on data about students' progress across the school. You are gathering sufficient information and evidence to demonstrate the progress you are making against the actions identified in your plan.

You have acted swiftly to tackle weaker teaching, and have provided an appropriate level of support and challenge to those teachers whose teaching requires improvement. Your evidence demonstrates that giving these teachers a very short timescale in which to improve their practice is effective. At the same time, you are working well with teachers whose practice is already good to make them even more effective. Attendance at voluntary training sessions by these teachers is impressive. You are making effective use of your very best teachers to share good practice across the school. However, there is still too much teaching that is not yet consistently good.

You have raised the profile of those students entitled to pupil premium by appointing an assistant headteacher with specific responsibility for this group of students. Many of these students who recently sat their GCSE examination in mathematics early achieved well.

You have very recently revised your marking policy. Although there has been little time to demonstrate the impact of this measure, I saw some helpful marking during my visits to lessons. Students are starting to assess their own progress and that of their peers more frequently, and to respond to their teachers' comments in greater detail.

Governors acknowledge that they have not been as effective in the past as they would have liked, but now welcome the openness and transparency of your style of leadership. They are starting to challenge more, and request evidence to support what they are being told by the school's leaders. You are making effective use of the expertise in your own school to provide support for Nicholas Breakspear. You are also wisely drawing on the support of external consultants to drive improvement in the school, including from the local authority, in driving improvements in English. The local authority and the Westminster Academy Trust also monitor progress against your action plan. Although the Trust forms part of the monitoring group, it has not produced a suitable document which states clearly how it intends to monitor the school's progress, how it can provide support and how it plans to notify parents

and carers of the school's progress. It is essential that this document be in place as soon as possible.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The Trust's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire, the Diocese of Westminster, the Education Funding Agency and the DfE-Academies Advisers Unit. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector