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12 February 2014

Father J Briody
Headteacher
Savio Salesian College
Netherton Way
Bootle
Merseyside
L30 2NA

Dear Father Briody

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Savio Salesian College

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 most recent monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged as having serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in May 2013. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the trustees of the school and the Director of Young People and Families for Sefton.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2013

- Ensure teaching is at least good and meets the varying needs of all students closely enough in order to raise standards and accelerate progress further so that students make at least good progress, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - giving students more opportunities to find things out for themselves and thus take more responsibility for their own progress
 - improving marking and written feedback so that students are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work
 - extending the sharing of good and exemplary classroom practice across the school
 - ensuring the school's literacy and numeracy policies are applied consistently by staff so that students can practise and reinforce their skills in English and mathematics in all subjects.

- Build upon the school's strategies to improve the attendance of those students who do not come to school as regularly as they should.

- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - improving the procedures to enable all leaders to make and maintain accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning over time
 - sharpening the evaluation of the quality of learning in the classroom by academic department heads.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 11 February 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, two members of the governing body, including the Chair and a representative from the local authority. The inspector observed lessons with senior and middle leaders, looked at students' work and scrutinised documents, including the school's progress information. The inspector concentrated on evaluating improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, attendance and the quality of middle leadership.

Context

There have been no contextual changes since the last monitoring inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders are taking effective action to improve students' education. They have an increasingly accurate picture of the quality of teaching because lessons are observed more frequently. The judgements made by senior leaders about teaching and learning have been checked by external consultants. Leaders' judgements during joint observations were accurate and precise according to these external sources.

Middle leadership is improving. Heads of department have been trained in conducting lesson observation. They are using these new skills to form more accurate evaluations of the quality of teaching in their departments. For example, increased scrutiny of students' work is leading to improvements in the quality of feedback teachers provide, particularly in English and science. As a result, students know what they need to do to improve. Heads of department report more frequently to senior leaders; they are being held accountable for the quality of teaching and students' progress in their subject areas. Targeted support coupled with sharper, more focused challenge for underperforming staff are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching. However, there are still some inconsistencies and teaching is not sufficiently strong in mathematics. Leaders are aware of these issues and are taking appropriate actions to tackle remaining weaknesses.

Students' progress is improving because the quality of teaching is getting better. Students make better progress in English than in mathematics because external support from the local authority for the English department has led to better teaching. Leaders recognise and accept this and have sought external support to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this support.

Better tracking of students' progress, brought about by a strengthening of the leadership of the school in September 2013, is improving knowledge of where students succeed or underperform. This information is being used more effectively to target support for students who need it. For example, some heads of department use data to make better-informed decisions about the classes in which students are taught so that the level of work is matched to their abilities. Similarly, additional literacy and numeracy support for some students introduced following analysis of their performance is accelerating their progress in

basic skills. This additional support is particularly effective in improving the standard of reading for less able pupils.

Attendance is improving. The school suffered an outbreak of the Norovirus over a three week period of the autumn term, which had a negative impact on attendance during that period of time. However, the school's response to absence, which includes a home visit by the school's attendance officer on the first day of any absence, is helping to raise attendance levels. Persistent absentees are closely monitored by the school and appropriate actions are taken to improve their regular attendance but it is too soon to see significant impact of these strategies.

Governors monitor the impact of actions taken to improve the school through regular monitoring group meetings. The challenge to senior leaders to bring about improvement is clear within the minutes of these meetings and is resulting in much improved accountability at all levels of leadership.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Senior leaders know what needs to be done to improve the school.
- Teaching and learning are improving, particularly in English where improvement is leading to better progress.
- Middle leaders are increasingly effective and are developing the skills needed to check and evaluate their area of responsibility rigorously.
- Attendance is improving because of more robust and immediate challenge to all absences.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- In some lessons, progress is limited because there is not enough challenge; questions are not used effectively to check students understand what is being taught and teachers do not effectively use the contributions that students make to discussions.
- The attendance of students who are persistently absent is not improving at the same rate as attendance overall.

External support

The local authority is providing appropriate support for the school including the provision of consultant support for the English department. This is having positive impact on the quality of teaching and standards of achievement. Additionally, the school receives support from a National Leader in Education from outside the local authority area who is working closely with the headteacher to secure improvements in middle leadership.