

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 9153
Direct email: naik.sandhu@serco.com

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Mrs Jackie Robinson and Mrs Tommie Casey
Acting Headteachers
The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School
Kingsland Gardens
Kingsthorpe
Northampton
NN2 7BH

Dear Mrs Robinson and Mrs Casey

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 May 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 on 31 January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the acting headteachers, a representative of the local authority, and a representative of the diocese. Telephone conversations were held with the Chair of the newly formed Standards Improvement Board, and a representative of an educational trust who are beginning to work with the school. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection, an executive headteacher has been appointed to support the school. The committee of governors supporting the school from the local federation of schools has been disbanded. In its place, a Standards Improvement

Board, with similar functions to an Interim Executive Board, has recently been formed. Three teachers have left the school and two new teachers have been appointed. Interviews to appoint a substantive headteacher are imminent. The Saint Bonaventure Trust has been approved by the Department for Education to become a sponsor for the school in a partnership arrangement with the David Ross Education Trust (DRET). Consequently, the school is expected to convert to academy status from January 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Appropriate actions have been identified by leaders and the local authority to improve the quality of leadership and the overall effectiveness of the school. A suitable statement of action has been drawn up by the local authority, and a series of meetings have been arranged to evaluate its impact. School leaders have devised an improvement plan to identify how the school will address all of the issues identified at the time of the last inspection. A number of the key actions in the plan are already underway. For example, a team of governors has been assembled, including some new members, to form a Standards Improvement Board. Minutes from the first meeting of the board indicate an increased level of challenge for school leaders. It was agreed during the visit that minor amendments will be made to the school's improvement plan and the local authority statement of action to reflect the very recent changes made to the school's governance. Both plans, once amended, will be forwarded to me electronically by the end of May 2014.

The appointment of an executive headteacher has led to a number of improvements. For example, there is now a clear division of roles for each of the acting headteachers. This is leading to more focused support in a number of areas, including for the school's newly qualified teachers. The executive headteacher has also played a key role in implementing systems to improve the quality and consistency of teaching of reading and writing; for example, through the introduction of 'Magic Lists' in each classroom to remind pupils of the key features of effective writing, and a new system of teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make). Good use has been made of external consultants to support the school in drawing up plans to improve the curriculum and begin to improve provision in mathematics. Improvements have also been made to the security of the school site.

Leaders have been too slow to arrange an external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding. The impact of this review will be checked during the next monitoring visit. Although improvements have been made to the security of the school site, some areas of the school, including corridors, some classrooms and storage areas, are cluttered and untidy. Leaders have been asked to work with staff to address this issue before the next inspection.

Leaders have taken appropriate actions to improve the ways in which staff work and communicate with parents and carers. For example, a 'Parent Task Force' has been formed to enable parents to meet with school leaders to discuss ideas about how the school could improve further.

The school is in the process of appointing a number of new teachers for September 2014. The school's leadership team does not have the capacity to support additional newly qualified teachers at this time.

Leaders are working effectively with partners to do all they can to ensure that the school's transition to academy status runs smoothly.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Standards Improvement Board, the Diocesan Board of Education for the Diocese of Northampton, and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector