

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

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Andrew Dickson
Interim Headteacher
St Ignatius College
Turkey Street
Enfield
EN1 4NP

Dear Mr Dickson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Ignatius College

Following my visit to your school on 14 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- ensure all teachers are aware of how to use national expectations for students' progress between Years 7 to 11 to better assess their students' progress
- ensure all teachers use questions to check whether students understand the work they are taught during lessons
- continue to develop the quality of teaching by holding staff to account for their performance as quickly as possible when weaknesses are identified.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of subject leaders, a group of teachers and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with the headteacher of Highlands School, who is a National Leader of Education (NLE). You joined me in making visits to lessons and we scrutinised pupils' work. I evaluated your action plans and reviewed other relevant documentation.

Context

There have been numerous staff changes since the last inspection. Key changes include an assistant headteacher being seconded to another school until September 2014 and the Year 7 linemaster (head of year) is now the acting assistant headteacher. Two classroom teachers have been promoted to coordinate the development of whole-school literacy and the school council. One of two new clerical assistants is providing administration support for senior and middle leaders.

Main findings

The school's post-Ofsted operational action plan addresses the areas for improvement. It has realistic deadlines for action with clear outcomes to raise students' achievement. This plan is supported by a joint school and local authority action plan which states how the school's actions will be evaluated by different stakeholders. This means those responsible for developing and monitoring the actions can be held to account.

Many teachers now use information about students' performance to set different work for students of different abilities. This is starting to improve teachers' lesson planning. Senior and middle leaders are beginning to use the national expectations between Years 7 to 11 as a benchmark to judge students' progress. However, there is inconsistency among teachers to judge students' progress against national milestones. This means some teachers' knowledge of how to plan lessons to ensure students make progress comparable with other students nationally varies.

You are beginning to challenge students more effectively by training teachers to ask questions that are more demanding. You intend to continue to develop how teachers use questions to check whether students' understand their work to improve their learning. Teachers' marking is becoming more effective because they are now using written comments to guide students to improve their work. As a result, students' learning is improving because they are expected to correct their work by responding to teachers' comments. Nonetheless, some teachers are still adopting this new style of marking which means it is used consistently across the school.

Teachers' practice is getting better because you have set up numerous opportunities for them to share good practice and arranged visits to a local outstanding school. For example, middle leaders have jointly evaluated the quality of marking in different subjects and cascaded the best practice to their teams. Good marking practice is shared on the school's intranet as are lesson plans judged to result in outstanding teaching over time. Your staff are visiting Highlands School to work jointly with leaders and observe outstanding teaching and learning.

You and your senior team are increasingly holding staff to account for the quality of teaching. This is principally happening through newly introduced termly monitoring events to check teacher performance. The result is that best practice is being adopted by many teachers across the school. Those who are struggling are supported through the newly introduced teacher improvement programme. You intend to reduce the time between identifying staff that need to improve their teaching and holding them to account for their performance. This is to support the school to continue to improve the quality of teaching as quickly as possible.

Governors have set up a new 'governor rapid recovery group' which meets twice a term to evaluate leaders' impact to drive the actions in the school's post-Ofsted plan. Governors are very aware of the changes required for the school to improve. At the time of this visit, governors were appointing an additional interim headteacher to increase the capacity of the leadership team to implement change quickly.

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 Principal of Highlands School visits once a week to work alongside you and your senior leaders to help the school to improve. This external support is used well. Visits have focussed on helping leaders to write and implement the post-Ofsted action plan, validated leaders' teaching judgements and reviewed mathematics. The local authority representative is supporting the school effectively by establishing the link with Highlands School, reviewing the quality of teaching and supporting you to evaluate the impact of actions you are taking to make improvements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Trustees of the Society of Jesus, the Director of Children's Services for Enfield and the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

Yours sincerely

Pamela Fearnley
Her Majesty's Inspector