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15 May 2014

Mr M Franchetti
Headteacher
St Joseph's College
Beulah Hill
London
SE19 3HL

Dear Mr Franchetti

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's College

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- sharpen its action plan so that there is a clear focus on the progress that different groups of students are making at key checkpoints
- ensure that information about students' achievement is accurate and that this is used by teachers to check regularly that all students are achieving well
- use the different sources of information collected about the quality of teaching in all subjects to make accurate, consistent judgements about the impact of teaching on students' achievement over time.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and two members of the Governing Body, representatives from the diocese and local

authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I looked at your information about students' achievement and other documents relating to the improvements you have made. I visited lessons in different subject areas with you and a deputy headteacher.

Context

There have been no changes in staffing since the last inspection. A small number of teachers have resigned and will leave at the end of the academic year.

Main findings

Although there have been a number of revisions to the school's action plan since the last inspection, it does not provide clear enough information about how the success of actions will be measured. It identifies the key areas for improvement, but these are not linked to the intended impact on the achievement of different groups of students. In addition, some actions lack a precise focus and it is not clear how their impact will be evaluated. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders and governors to judge how effective actions have been in bringing about necessary improvements quickly enough.

Senior leaders have begun to raise expectations of what students can achieve. Targets for students are now more ambitious. External advisers say that the headteacher has sought to tackle identified weaknesses and that there is a 'step-change' in the culture of the school. Systems are in place for recording and tracking students' achievement. However, this information is not being used effectively enough to inform all leaders and teachers about the impact of teaching on achievement. Leaders are not focused sharply enough on monitoring the progress of different groups of students at each key checkpoint, to ensure that gaps are continuing to close. As a result, the pace of improvement has been too slow. In addition, leaders identified during this inspection that some of the information presented about students' achievement was inaccurate.

Leaders have increased the scrutiny of the quality of teaching. Action plans identify appropriate support for teachers who require it. Leaders conduct 'learning walks', book checks and lesson observations on a regular cycle. The college's monitoring records show that this has led an overall improvement in the quality of teaching. However, too many inconsistencies remain. The criteria by which the quality of teaching is judged are unclear. As a result, the college's view of the quality of teaching is overly generous.

Teachers' marking is more regular since the last inspection. However, leaders correctly identify that students do not routinely act upon the advice they have been given. This is supported by the evidence seen on this inspection. As a result, students do not always make the progress of which they are capable. This is

because teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what students can achieve.

Leaders report that the quality of teaching in the sixth form remains variable. They acknowledge that they need to do more to ensure that there is greater consistency in achievement across subjects. Recent interventions to support underachieving students have resulted in improved progress, although it has been less effective for a small number of students. New courses have been offered which provide different learning opportunities, more suited to the range of students' abilities. Leaders' analysis of tracking information shows that students on these courses are making at least adequate progress from their starting points.

Governors are beginning to ask more challenging questions. They acknowledge that improvement needs to be more rapid. However, they are not being provided with enough information about the quality of teaching and its impact on the achievement of different groups of students at regular checkpoints. As a consequence, their ability to 'drill down' and challenge leaders to account for the slow rate of improvement is hampered.

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 college has made limited use of external support. The Diocese of Southwark has recently conducted a recent review of the quality of religious education. This has been useful in identifying specific areas for improvement. The school commissions a school improvement adviser from the local authority. The headteacher reports that adviser visits provide useful feedback. However, there are no written reports produced or presented to the governing body and there is insufficient evidence to show that this feedback has been used to drive necessary improvements.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Croydon, the Education Funding Agency, the Diocese of Southwark and the Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Russell Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector