

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



26 June 2014

Mrs Siobhan Minford
Headteacher
Holy Cross School: A Catholic Voluntary Academy, Whitwick, Leicestershire
Parsonwood Hill
Whitwick
Coalville
LE67 5AT

Dear Mrs Minford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Cross School: A Catholic Voluntary Academy, Whitwick, Leicestershire

Following my visit to your academy on 25 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, two other leaders and three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met with two representatives of the academy trust. We visited all classes to look at the learning that was taking place. I looked at a range of documentation, including the academy's information about pupils' progress, a sample of pupils' work and the academy's improvement plan.

Main findings

You, staff and governors are determined to secure a good standard of education for all pupils. You had already identified the reasons behind the weaknesses in pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics. You have wasted no time in

making sure that teachers' checking of pupils' progress is more secure and that leaders' meetings with teachers are more frequent. The latter help identify which pupils are underachieving and you are making sure that interventions to tackle weaknesses are in place. For example, individual pupils are having short, one-to-one sessions that are sharply focused on improving pupils' literacy skills. External support from within the trust's group of schools is being used well to improve teachers' skills in assessing work so that it is more accurate. Your plan to access further support for subject leaders to work alongside external consultants and leaders is well judged. This is to make sure that the quality of subject leaders' evaluations is robust when they check how well teaching is contributing to pupils' progress over time. You have raised teachers' expectations about the marking of pupils' work and pupils' responses to advice. You recognise that the expectations you have set out about marking have not been implemented as quickly as they could have been.

Governors continue to make regular visits to the school. They have discussed the last inspection findings, which they agree to be an accurate reflection, and they are committed to bring about rapid improvement. They are taking a keen interest in the implementation of the school improvement plan which addresses all of the areas identified in the last inspection. Although the plan identifies measurable criteria for pupils' achievement, these are not sharp enough in identifying the proportion of pupils expected to make specific amounts of progress. Moreover, the plan is unclear about the distinctive roles of those who are checking that actions are being carried out; and those who are evaluating whether the actions are leading to securing the improvements necessary for the school to be judged as good at its next inspection.

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

You have quickly sought the support of senior leaders from a local school to help teachers see effective practice in assessing and tracking pupils' work. Within the academy trust, there are other sources of expertise which you plan to use to help improve the quality of teaching and subject leadership. Securing external support with regard to marking pupils' work effectively, to ensure speedier improvement in the school, is recommended.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children and Family Services for Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector