

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 9165
Direct email: victoria.mortimore2@serco.com

12 January 2015

Mr Glen Alexander
Headteacher
Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School
Victoria Road
Acocks Green
Birmingham
B27 7XY

Dear Mr Alexander

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Archbishop Ilsley Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 9 January 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all teachers' marking in science gives students precise guidance about how to improve their work.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last monitoring inspection. I also

met with the subject leaders of English, mathematics, science and literacy. I visited classes in Years 9, 10 and 12 to see the students at work in English and science. I spoke to the students about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I sought the views of staff. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's information about students' progress. I also looked at a large number of students' books.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection visit, 15 teachers from a range of departments have left the school. They have all been replaced. You have restructured and made new appointments to your leadership team.

Main findings

Since the last monitoring inspection visit in October 2013, you and other leaders at all levels have worked urgently and effectively to address the areas for improvement identified at my last visit and at the last full inspection. As a consequence, the attainment and progress of the Year 11 students who left the school in June 2014 have improved and are in-line with national figures in English and above in mathematics. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's progress and the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The information leaders collect on students' progress is used to monitor and evaluate how effectively teachers help students improve their knowledge and understanding. This has enabled you to identify areas of good practice, for example in English, and areas in need of further attention, for example the marking of students' work in science. Senior and subject leaders meet fortnightly to review students' progress. This process has been helped by the introduction of aspirational short-term targets, or 'inch-pebbles', against which students' progress is measured. As a result, any students who are not making the progress expected of them are quickly identified and supported.

The majority of teachers' effectively monitor students' progress. Students said that the introduction of 'PAR' (progress, action, response) marking has helped them better understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. The scrutiny of students' books shows that the majority of teachers are consistently using this approach and that students' work is improving as a result. However, not all teachers in science are giving effective feedback that supports students in improving their work.

Information provided by the school shows that the quality of teaching and students' achievement have improved in the sixth form. All the students leaving in 2014 wishing to go to university secured a place at their first choice university. All other students are in employment or training.

Disadvantaged students are supported through a range of interventions. These include extra subject time for English and mathematics and additional support in developing their reading and writing skills. The progress of disadvantaged students is closely monitored and interventions quickly applied for those not making the progress expected of them. As a consequence, the gap between this group of students and others in the school is closing. Governors monitor the spending of the pupil premium grant, government funding to support disadvantaged students, and have a clear understanding of the effect of the spending on students' progress.

An external review of governance was carried out in November 2013. As a result of this review, the governing body sub-committees were re-structured in order to better focus on the work of the school. Governors receive regular and accurate information from school leaders about students' progress including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. As a consequence, governors have a secure understanding about the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

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

School leaders are working with good and outstanding schools who provide advice and guidance. This has included moderating the grades and levels awarded to students and working with subject departments and the sixth form to improve the quality of teaching.

The local authority has provided appropriate and effective support to the school. This has included making links with good and outstanding schools, supporting school leaders with reviews of the quality of teaching and developing systems to check students' progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham, The Education Funding Agency and the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector