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

Dear Mr Franchetti

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

Following my visit to your school on 2 February, 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 January 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. The school should take further action to

- increase the pace at which improvements in the quality of teaching are taking place, particularly in humanities, so that students make more rapid progress in all subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and three members of the governing body, representatives from the archdiocese and the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated information about students' achievement and other school documentation. I visited lessons in different subject areas with you.

Context

Four new leadership posts have been created. The school has recruited a head of Year 12, a Key Stage 3 science coordinator, a second in charge of English and a Head of Year 8. Five teachers have left the school and all vacant posts have been filled.

Main findings

Since the last report, leaders have sharpened their focus on the key areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. There is a tangible change in the culture of the school; staff understand that there is an increased expectation of students and the progress they should be making. Leaders have revised the school's action plan, which now includes more precise targets and more easily quantifiable milestones for success.

Importantly, governors are more rigorous when checking whether or not actions to drive improvement are having sufficient impact. They have undertaken an audit of their skills and targeted training where it is most needed. Governors have a better understanding of information about students' achievement and ask challenging questions to hold leaders to account. Rightly, they have recognised that the pace of improvement must increase further for the school to make the necessary strides needed to get to good by the next full inspection. Governors have high expectations of what students should be achieving across all groups and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They regularly scrutinise information which is given to them or is available nationally. They are carefully reviewing governance committee structures to ensure that the focus on driving improvement remains sufficiently sharp.

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Leaders have ensured that there are more robust and coherent systems in place to track and evaluate more accurately the quality of teaching and make appropriate links with the impact on students' achievement. This is making a difference. Students are making more rapid gains in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Teachers provide regular and helpful feedback to students about what they need to do to make better progress. Students say this is helpful and appreciate the help they are given. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain in a small number of subject areas, particularly in humanities. As a result, students' progress is less rapid in history, geography and religious education. Leaders and governors understand that this must be tackled quickly, so that the pace of improvement is as strong across all subject areas.

The school has strengthened capacity in sixth form leadership through the appointment of a head of Year 12. Leaders have targeted interventions for individual

students identified as underachieving. The majority of students who have been given additional support have made better progress, as a result.

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 Archdiocese of Southwark has increased its level of support and challenge to the school. This, together with support from a school improvement adviser from the local authority, has provided useful feedback and improved the accuracy of the school's view of the quality of teaching. The archdiocese has provided the resources for an independent review of the quality of teaching, which is planned to take place this term. External advisers will provide further challenge meetings to scrutinise performance and this will be helpful to the school. Governors say that external scrutiny is useful in identifying the impact of actions and the progress the school is making.

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

Yours sincerely

Russell Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector