

PROTECT – INSPECTION



Tribal Education
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 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0845 123 6002
email:sarah.cartidge@tribalgroup.com

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Mr M Tissot
Acting Headteacher
St Thomas More Catholic School
Glendale Avenue
Wood Green
London
N22 5HN

Dear Mr Tissot

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Thomas More Catholic School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Evelyn Riley and I inspected your school on 24 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my particular thanks to students with whom I held discussions.

The number of students on roll has fallen since the previous inspection and the school is now smaller than the average secondary school. Only 57 students are in the current Year 7. The headteacher, in post during the last inspection, is currently on 'extended leave'. The school has been led since September 2010 by an experienced headteacher from St George's Catholic School. Two senior members of staff with responsibility for student welfare and learning support have also been seconded to the school from St George's. Thirteen members of teaching staff have left the school since the inspection and six new teachers have joined. The Chair of the Governing Body at the time of the last inspection has stepped down and a new chair of governors appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 November 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements, and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Both staff and students report that the acting headteacher has introduced greater clarity and consistency to the management of students' behaviour. As a result,

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students' behaviour has improved since the beginning of this academic year. The acting headteacher and senior leaders have an effective and visible presence around the school and there is a good level of staff supervision during break times. Around the school site students are generally orderly and polite and although some lively behaviour in corridors was observed, this was dealt with well by staff. Students spoken to said they felt safer around the school site as behaviour has improved. During the lessons, students listened well to the teacher and each other and readily responded to activities arranged for them. The acting headteacher's robust drive to improve behaviour has led to an increase in fixed-term exclusions. Although these have proved effective, in the short term, in improving behaviour, the rate is currently too high. During the last few weeks a greater focus has been placed on rewards for good behaviour; this is welcomed by students and is beginning to be effective. There is a good staff presence at the school gate to meet students in the morning. Late arrangements are working well and punctuality to school and between lessons has improved considerably since September. Attendance has also improved and is now above the national average.

The proportion of Year 11 students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics increased slightly in 2010. Despite this rise, the proportion remains well below the national average and attainment in English and mathematics remains too low. However, the school's assessment data and improved progress seen in lessons during this inspection indicate that the rise in students' attainment is beginning to accelerate.

The quality of teaching in the school is improving, although it remains satisfactory. There is now a slightly higher proportion of lessons in which teaching is good than at the time of the last inspection. Robust and accurate monitoring of teaching by senior leaders, linked to effective support and training, is having a positive impact on improving practice. Lessons are planned well with careful consideration given to the range of ability and learning needs of students in the class. Students whose first language is not English are well integrated into lessons and are provided with effective support. Improvements in teaching are evident in the better use of questioning by teachers to check and develop students' understanding and in the range of activities being used by teachers to actively engage students. However, in some lessons, teachers still talk for too long, do too much work for students and do not provide a sufficient range of activities that interest them and actively involve them in learning.

Challenging targets are set for students and the tracking system to monitor students' progress towards these targets has been developed well since the last inspection. The use of this system has been effectively improved since September so that underachieving students are now quickly identified and provided with effective one-to-one support. The range of after-school revision classes provided for Year 10 and 11 students is also beginning to have a positive impact on their progress, particularly in English and mathematics. Students are aware of their targets and how well they are doing. The quality of marking is improving. Good-quality marking that gives

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helpful, informative advice to students about how to improve was observed. However, this good practice is not yet consistently in place across the school.

The acting headteacher has put in place a range of rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures to increase the accountability of middle leaders. The line management system is now more robust. There are regular meetings between senior and middle leaders around a fixed agenda that ensures a clear focus on students' progress and the quality of teaching and behaviour. Middle leaders monitor teachers' planning and students' work and are beginning to be involved in the monitoring of teaching in their subject areas but this is at an early stage of development. The sharpness of middle leaders planning for improvement has been improved as a result of effective support and challenge by the acting headteacher and line managers.

The school has received a broad range of local authority support since the last inspection. Support has been provided for teaching, assessment, leadership and management and behaviour. This support has had a positive impact on driving improvement.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009.

- Raise attainment and increase progress at each key stage, particularly in core subjects, through improving the quality of teaching, assessment and responding to needs during lessons so that work becomes more active, more challenging and increases students' independence and understanding, including those at the early stages of learning English.
- Inform teaching and intervention more effectively through accurate assessment, including student self-assessment, target setting and tracking.
- Involve middle managers in communicating to all staff the drive to develop and achieve agreed targets, thereby increasing accountability for all, and sharpen evaluation and planning to secure rapid improvement.
- Ensure systems for behaviour management are applied consistently so that students' behaviour, punctuality and feelings of safety improve.