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7 March 2013

Sue Simmons  
Principal  
St Clement's Church of England Academy  
Butlin Street  
Birmingham  
B7 5NS

Dear Mrs Simmons

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of St Clement's Church of England Academy**

Following my visit with Paul Weston, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 5–6 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, five members of the governing body and three representatives of the academy trust. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in most classes at least once together with the Principal. They spoke with pupils in lessons as well as speaking with them at break times. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers during lunchtime and as part of a mathematics workshop.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

## **Context**

St Clements Church of England Academy opened on 1 October 2012, following the closure of St Clements Primary School. The academy is sponsored by the Birmingham Diocesan Education Trust. There are currently 206 pupils on roll, almost all of whom are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. About half do not speak English as their first language. Around three-quarters of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is much higher than that found in other schools nationally. An average proportion of pupils is identified as having special educational needs or who have a statement of special educational needs. The academy opened with a full complement of staff and there have been no problems in recruitment.

## **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Pupils' learning and progress has improved considerably in the relatively short period of time since the academy opened. Children start the academy in the Early Years Foundation Stage with starting points that are well below what is typical for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics. Observations of early reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 showed pupils making better progress. This is because they are using a variety of ways to begin to read and understand simple texts using their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics).

In Years 1, 2 and 3, pupils are showing skills and abilities in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with those found in other schools nationally. In reading, in Year 1, they are slightly above average. Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making more rapid progress and catching up with other pupils nationally. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for whom the academy receives additional money to support their learning (pupil premium), are beginning to make faster progress than other pupils do in the academy.

The academy's own assessments of the pupils' learning in Year 6 show that virtually all pupils are now making at least the progress they should. Pupils' attainment in Year 6 is slowly getting closer to the minimum standard set by the government, particularly in reading and writing. However, there is unevenness in pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in Years 4 and 5, where standards are not rising quickly enough. Progress in mathematics is not as rapid as it could be because teachers do not give the most able pupils hard enough work. Those pupils who need extra help to learn English and those who are more advanced in learning English sometimes do not get the right kind of help, particularly in developing their skills in writing.

High priority is given to improving pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are focusing on making sure that pupils understand key ideas, use the correct mathematical terms and are building their confidence in

tackling mathematical problems. In reading, teachers are making sure that pupils have a secure understanding of phonics and its link with early writing skills. Other subjects are taught through topics and themes, and these are increasingly linked well to work covered in English and mathematics. The use of 'Learning Journals' across the year groups are a valuable resource which allows teachers to track pupils' learning and progress in these other subjects.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving and enabling pupils to make at least the progress they should, and sometimes better than expected progress. The Principal can already demonstrate improvement in the way several staff teach resulting in pupils' improved learning and progress and higher standards. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. Pupils often work together in pairs and small groups. They are increasingly able to take turns in discussions and are respectful of others' work.

Where learning is most effective, teachers set work at the right level of difficulty for pupils, often finding an unusual or real-life angle to capture their interest. Pupils, as a result, are well engaged in their lessons. This was evident in Year 6, where pupils' journalistic writing ideas were based around the work of the Wright Brothers' invention of the aeroplane. Pupils were engrossed in their writing in the style of a broadsheet newspaper and showed increasing skill in checking their own work and that of others. Equally challenging activities were seen in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, where pupils found different ways of solving division and multiplication calculations.

Sometimes, teachers do not use questions well enough to check that pupils have understood the task set or whether some pupils can move on more quickly to more difficult work. Therefore, those pupils capable of doing much harder work do not always get the opportunity so they do not learn as quickly as they should.

Pupils' recent work indicates that teachers have increasingly high expectations of the quantity and presentation of written work in Years 1, 2, 3 and 6. Elsewhere, however, there is the occasional readiness to accept poorly presented work, which means that some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Teachers' marking of pupils' work is improving, with some teachers giving pupils clear guidance about the next steps in their learning. Although there are some good examples of marking, some teachers only give positive comments rather than checking on pupils' work carefully. In addition, few teachers expect pupils to respond to their comments.

The academy has made considerable improvement to the building in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children now have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of good-quality and purposeful resources and appropriately planned activities.

However, the best use is not always made of these resources and adults in order to develop children's imaginative play.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are unfailingly polite, articulate and friendly, and they behave well in lessons and around the school. They confirm that they feel safe and secure, and that bullying is rare and dealt with quickly. Pupils from widely varying backgrounds relate well to each other and their behaviour is appropriate. Those facing challenges in their lives are well supported, for example through the pastoral leader and learning mentor who provide them with opportunities to talk about their concerns and develop ways to cope with their difficulties.

Pupils report that they value being taught about how to deal with the anti-social behaviour, gang culture, knife and gun crime that exists in some of their local neighbourhoods. The academy does not shy away from confronting these issues and adopts a proactive approach. Positive role models are used to reinforce high standards of behaviour and to help pupils understand how to deal with difficulties that they may meet, including in relation to the safe use of the internet and social networking sites. Attendance is now in line with the national average and has improved considerably because of the good range of strategies to promote better attendance.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

The academy leaders, with good support from the sponsor and members of the governing body, have identified the academy's most important priorities for improvement. Staff morale is high and they are committed to improvement. They are beginning to work well as a team and are determined to tackle underperformance thoroughly. While much has been done to strengthen the leadership, further work is needed because much of the improvement rests in the hands of the Principal. She has brought commitment, energy and experience, and has already implemented an effective and wide-ranging plan to improve the quality of teaching.

Communication with parents and carers and the wider community has been strengthened. Parents and carers know that they can come into school to see individual members of staff or the Principal should they have a difficulty. She is winning the hearts and minds of most parents and carers in making the required changes to the academy to increase its effectiveness as a place for learning. She is clear that much more needs to be done to capitalise on the improved attitudes to learning to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential.

Checks on what is happening in the academy and how well things are working are comprehensive. The Principal checks on the progress of pupils regularly. She focuses in detail on most groups of pupils but not in enough detail on the progress made by pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language.

Judgements about how the academy is progressing are accurate; leaders know where further improvement is needed. For example, governors know that there is still some way to go in ensuring that standards in key subjects are in line with those found nationally at the end of Key Stage 2.

Some teachers in charge of subjects and aspects in the school, such as English and mathematics, are beginning to check on other teachers' work in the classroom. However, they do not explain precisely what each teacher needs to work on to improve their practice so that pupils learn more quickly.

Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. The governing body is knowledgeable about the academy and is, consequently, in a strong position to provide suitable challenge and ensure equality of opportunity, particularly in helping to overcome some pupils' barriers to learning. .

The academy has demonstrated that it has capacity to sustain and extend the improvements made in the first six months. However, not all governors are involved in gathering first-hand evidence. They are sometimes a little reliant on information provided by the academy.

### **External support**

The academy receives effective and continuing support from its partner school in relation to refining the quality of teaching and moderating assessments. The headteacher of the partner school contributes strongly by providing training to those responsible for subjects and the improvement of teaching. The academy's challenge adviser makes regular visits to check on how well leaders and managers are raising standards. Regular reports to the challenge board show how the academy is making progress against its action plan.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase the proportion of consistently good and better teaching by making sure that teachers:
  - understand the specific linguistic needs of all pupils who speak English as an additional language and plan work that more closely meets their needs
  - provide more opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop children's imaginative play and ensure that plans focus on what they want children to learn from such experiences.
  
- Strengthen leadership and management, and governance, by:
  - ensuring that, following lesson observations, subject leaders give precise feedback to teachers on what they need to do to improve
  - improving the quality of leadership of support for pupils who speak English as an additional language

- making sure that governors gain first-hand evidence rather than relying on the information from the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**