

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View
Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 937

Direct F 01695 729 320

Direct email: jsimmons@cfbt.com



29 April 2014

Mr Kevin McDermott
Headteacher
University Church of England Academy
164 Whitby Road
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 6EA

Dear Mr McDermott

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of University Church of England Academy

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the Executive Principal and other senior and middle leaders, the governing body's 'Statement of Action Committee' and representatives of the sponsor. The sponsor's statement of action, the academy's action plan, the academy's single central record and other documents relating to self-evaluation were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection, an Executive Principal was appointed for the period November 2013 to August 2014. The current Principal has resigned his post and will leave the academy in August 2014. A new Principal has been appointed who will take up post in September 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders have acted quickly to begin to address the areas identified for improvement.

The academy and its sponsor have incorporated the areas for improvement from the inspection into a single detailed statement of action that is used both by the academy and the sponsor to measure and evaluate progress.

The document is comprehensive and includes measurable targets and milestones against which improvement is judged by both senior leaders and the governing body. The use of this single working document is useful to senior staff and governors to ensure improvements are on track and that a difference is being made to the outcomes for students.

The governing body and University of Chester Academy Trust (UCAT) have taken appropriate steps to try to improve leadership of the academy.

Governance of the academy is improving. A 'Statement of Action Committee' has been formed and meets fortnightly to hold both senior and middle leaders to account for the impact of their actions. This committee has taken over responsibilities of other committees of the governing body, which have been temporarily suspended. This gives it real bite and authority, allowing decisions to be made quickly to maintain the momentum of progress. The committee is strengthened by the inclusion of other governors with specific expertise drawn from across the academy trust and the teaching school alliances associated with Saint John Plessington Catholic College. The committee is chaired by a national leader of governance. The external review of governance recommended by the last inspection is complete and its recommendations are being implemented.

The academy has formed a partnership with Saint John Plessington Catholic College, an outstanding teaching academy that is an affiliate of UCAT. Evidence presented by the academy demonstrates this partnership is bringing about improvements in leadership, learning and the quality of teaching by providing coaching for leaders and teachers and opportunities for them to see and learn from outstanding practice.

Senior and middle leaders are sharpening their focus on students' progress and achievement because of support and coaching from the partner academy. Leaders are now using students' current assessment grades rather than staff predictions of where students are anticipated to be at the end of the year. This is improving their picture of performance in each subject. Consequently, senior leaders are improving the quality of their challenge to subject leaders.

Students are making better progress because they receive better information about what they need to do to improve their work. The academy's policy for marking has been reviewed and leaders are ensuring it is more consistently applied.

Students' punctuality is improving because the academy's day has been reorganised. Lessons start promptly at the start of the day.

According to academy data, standards in English and mathematics are rising. Academy leaders attribute this to the actions they have taken to improve the quality of teaching and other actions, including increasing the amount of lessons students receive in English and mathematics and the reduction of class sizes in these subjects.

Leaders are improving the rigour of their self-evaluation and have identified that the academy's current Key Stage 3 curriculum is inadequate for some of the more able students. Leaders are implementing appropriate changes to the curriculum in response to this evaluation.

Provision for safeguarding children continues to meet requirements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director of Children's Services for Cheshire West and Chester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector