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2 July 2014

Mr Lee Harris  
Headteacher  
Bolton St Catherine's Academy  
Stitch-MI-Lane  
Harwood  
Bolton  
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Dear Mr Harris

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bolton St Catherine's Academy, Bolton**

Following my visit to your academy on 1 July 2014, 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 first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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:

Revise the action plan to include milestones so that senior leaders and governors can check how successful it is at key points during the year.

**Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your vice principals, two groups of students and four representatives of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's action plan and other documentation related to school improvement were evaluated and learning walks to see the impact of actions were undertaken alongside yourself and a vice principal.

## **Main findings**

The school's detailed action plan builds upon the positive actions of senior leaders and governors to improve the academy identified in the last inspection and sets out clear and appropriate actions that are based on the areas for improvement. However, this should be further enhanced by the inclusion of milestones that will allow governors to more accurately check it is working.

You are working hard to improve the quality teaching across the school and have increased the frequency and rigour of checks to ensure this. These include more regular scrutiny of the quality of teachers' planning and checks on its impact in lessons and students' books. Teaching is improving because you hold teachers more closely to account through detailed discussions regarding students' progress. Where necessary, focussed training and coaching for individuals along with clear deadlines are accelerating the pace of improvement.

Marking is improving because you have made it clear what is expected from teachers and ensured that they are better trained in how to give feedback that guides students to improve their work. Furthermore, you check more frequently that your expectations are being met. However, in some subjects such as science, further improvement is still necessary to ensure students are clear about how they can improve their work and so that teachers can amend their lessons to help them. Senior leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate actions.

Assessment and the use of data are improving. The new data profiles that all teachers are required to maintain increases their awareness of students' achievements. Consequently more lessons are planned so that the difficulty of work is better matched to students' abilities. Leaders use this data well to monitor students' success, and diagnose where they need offer additional support or intervene to secure improvements in the quality of teaching.

Students are making better choices for their sixth form courses because you have increased the guidance available to them and made it available earlier. Those students already in the sixth form are improving their attendance because you have amended timetables to provide more supervised study sessions that they are required to attend. Additionally, the extended personal research project that all students in the sixth form complete harnesses their personal interests and is leading to them developing better study skills.

Students' behaviour related to learning is improving rapidly because they are set clear and consistent expectations on how to behave, irrespective of subject. These expectations for learning are exemplified by three simple logos which are displayed, in every lesson to help students know how to act. The use of these logos is well received by students and having positive impact.

Your actions to eradicate smoking by students on academy premises are particularly successful. Increased supervision and the provision of support from local health services, alongside improved communication with parents, have dramatically reduced the numbers of students smoking in the academy.

Governors have increased the frequency of their visits to the academy and meet regularly with staff and students to discuss the impact of actions so as to better hold senior leaders to account. Each governor has clear responsibilities for monitoring specific areas of the action plan which improves the sharpness of their focus. Those governors spoken with have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses and a shared commitment to secure improvement, particularly in the quality of teaching.

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 academy draws effectively on external support from a variety of sources including school to school support to provide appropriate training for staff and to externally evaluate the impact of its actions to improve.

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.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**