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Julie Roberts
Headteacher
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Terry Road
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Dear Dr Roberts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Blue Coat Church of England School and Music College

Following my visit to your academy on 15 September 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 February 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 academy should take further action to:

- develop the 'green stamp' marking so that there is sufficient detail and challenge to enable the most-able students to consolidate and extend their learning and achieve at the highest level
- include students as part of the academy's monitoring of learning so they contribute to what helps them to learn most effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your senior leaders, the Chair and a member of the Governing Body, a member of Diocese, staff and students to

discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy's improvement plans were evaluated. I scrutinised a range of documents and visited five lessons.

Context

Two teachers have left the school and two new teachers have joined since the recent inspection. An additional librarian has joined the staff.

Main findings

The unvalidated examination results for summer 2014 for Year 11 and sixth form students indicate achievement is improving and the gap between students eligible for the pupil premium and non-pupil premium students is closing. This reflects the urgency and determination of your actions and that of your staff in tackling the weaknesses identified in the recent inspection.

Students are making better progress. The introduction of seating plans that include students' targets and starting points has increased the awareness of staff for the need for every student to make at least good progress based. The system used to track students' progress has been refined. As a result teachers and teaching assistants are held to account more effectively for the progress of different groups of students, especially those eligible for pupil premium funding. In addition, improvements have been made to the information that parents receive about students' progress.

Feedback to students about their work is improving. The use of 'green stamp' marking is more consistent and helpful. Teachers monitor students' understanding during lessons more frequently and adjust work in a timely fashion to match students' needs. Students stated that they had better feedback on how to improve their work. However, most-able students stated that they needed more detailed feedback to help them confidently achieve a higher standard of work.

Students are reading more frequently and widely. The accelerated reading groups first introduced into Year 7, and extended this year into Years 8 and 9, are improving students' reading skills. The refurbishment of the library and its extended opening times is increasing its use. The introduction of an annual reading test for Key Stage 3 students identifies those students in need of extra support. Students stated how much more confident they were in reading in subjects other than English, especially when asked to read aloud.

The academy's improvement plan clearly focuses on the key issues identified in the recent inspection and has an ambitious timeframe for raising standards. The recommendations from the recent review of pupil premium funding have been included in the action plan. Staff members who spoke with Her Majesty's Inspector had a clear understanding of their role and the actions being taken to make improvements.

Governors have tightened their monitoring systems. They regularly observe learning and look at students' work. The Chair of the Governing Body attends the recently introduced weekly teaching and learning briefings. The committee responsible for standards scrutinise progress data at every meeting and hold discussions with staff about any arising issues. Governors have also attended staff training sessions. Students are invited to talk to governors about their work. However, opportunities are missed to involve students more formally in evaluating and thinking about learning.

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 has a new school improvement partner this year, and also works closely with an external consultant. This provides the academy with an objectively critical view that is helping senior leaders to continue with their improvement work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Coventry and the Diocese of Hereford.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector