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17 October 2014

Ms J Ranger
Principal
John Henry Newman Academy
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Littlemore
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Dear Ms Ranger

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to John Henry Newman Academy

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 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 school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors and the sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure an effective whole-academy approach to managing behaviour is introduced quickly and train teachers fully in how to use new approaches to managing behaviour
- ensure teachers and assistants check how well pupils are learning when they are engaged in tasks and step in when mistakes are made or progress is too slow.

Evidence

During the inspection I held meetings with you, your leaders, the executive principal, representatives from the diocesan trust (the academy's sponsor) and two governors, including the Chair of Governors, to discuss actions taken since your previous inspection. I evaluated the improvement plan. You accompanied me on short visits to Nursery, Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 classes, an additional writing session for Year 3 pupils and to an assembly.

Context

Since September 2014, a temporary executive principal and nine new members of staff have joined the academy. Approximately half of the staff who have joined the academy are newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

The changes that you and your leaders have made are taking the academy in the right direction but they are not yet embedded. You and the executive principal are building up your leaders' expertise in observing teaching to make sure that changes are now put into practice consistently.

Your improvement plan rightly uses information about pupils' progress to identify the expected impact of your actions. However, the timescales for when checks on progress will be made throughout the year are too vague. You have introduced two major whole-academy approaches to teaching writing and developing reading. When I visited you were sensibly gathering information on pupils' progress to help you check whether these approaches are working.

Adjustments to teachers' marking are being implemented consistently in the classes I visited. Teachers make specific and, where necessary, detailed comments at the end of pupils' work that identify their next learning steps. However, the questions posed as part of the feedback are not always well-thought out. As a result they do not extend pupils' understanding or develop their thinking further. Moreover, teachers do not always check the quality of the follow-up work completed by pupils.

In some classes there are a number of pupils whose behaviour is challenging. Although their behaviour is improving, it still occasionally disrupts the learning of others. Teachers have not been adequately trained in how to prevent disruptive behaviour. The academy has not got a coherent system to ensure pupils with challenging behaviour receive the necessary support and sanctions to improve their conduct. The academy's sponsor has agreed to provide assistance to put this right.

Teachers are not consistently enforcing the high standards necessary to help pupils catch up when they have fallen behind. In some classes visited teachers were using

highly targeted questioning to check that pupils knew exactly what they were doing. In other classes, teachers and their assistants were not checking what pupils were doing or stepping in to help them do better. For instance, in a Year 3 small group writing session, one pupil had used incorrect grammar which was not corrected by the teacher.

The changes made to the governing body are appropriate. The Chair of the new 'oversight and scrutiny' board has relevant expertise. He is using it to ask challenging questions about recent test results and report any conclusions to the full governing body.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The diocesan trust has provided support by appointing a temporary executive principal to help the new principal develop robust systems for planning and monitoring. The sponsor's improvement advisor has made frequent visits to the academy to monitor the progress of developments. He has a very clear view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. He has arranged bespoke training with Oxford Brookes University to help middle leaders carry out their role more effectively. The sponsor agrees that it is important to continue its support with recruiting and retaining staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector