

17 June 2015

Mr Forhadul Islam  
Headteacher  
St Michael's CE Academy  
Flanshaw Lane  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire  
WF2 9JA

Dear Mr Islam

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Michael's CE Academy, Wakefield**

Following my visit with Fiona Manuel, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 16 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 March 2015. 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:

- ensure middle leaders have the knowledge and skills to check pupils' work more rigorously. Through this, they need to gather a more precise view of teaching, evaluate the impact of teaching over time on pupils' learning and identify which particular aspects of teaching need improving in order to improve teaching at a faster pace.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the Wakefield Diocesan Academies Trust to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the schools' action plan. We visited lessons and talked to pupils. We looked at pupils' work with middle leaders to see how effectively English and mathematics are taught.

### **Context**

Since the inspection, one teacher has left. You have appointed a teacher in Year 3 and a temporary teacher in Year 6.

## **Main findings**

You have responded to the inspection promptly and focused your actions on the areas for improvement. You have concentrated these actions on improving leadership with a view to leaders taking greater responsibility for improving teaching. Consequently, leaders' capacity to improve the school is increasing.

Your senior leadership team have sharpened the way they gather information about the progress pupils make. This means they have a clearer view of how well groups of pupils, such as the most able, are doing. You now know precisely which groups of pupils are underachieving and you are taking prompt action to address this. You hold class teachers to account for the progress these pupils make and you have improved how you target interventions and additional activities to close gaps in learning and raise attainment. You now check more robustly on the impact of these actions and make the changes necessary. Consequently, there are indications that more pupils are starting to achieve the higher levels they are capable of.

Leaders have quickly focused their checks on key areas for development such as reading. For example, through an audit of reading, they have identified what needs to change in the way guided reading is taught. They have established which resources need updating and refreshing to ensure you capture pupils' interest and to ensure they read more widely and often. You have taken action to improve the assessment of reading and you are making closer checks on the accuracy of teacher's assessment. Middle leaders are now playing a key role in developing this aspect. There is renewed excitement about reading in the school, but this is at an early stage of development and not fully evident in the progress pupils are making.

You are supporting new middle leaders to improve and you hold them to account for the impact of their work. They make checks on teacher's planning and teaching in lessons to ensure there is compliance with school policy and your expectation that the work teachers plan, challenges and supports pupils effectively. However, through some of our shared inspection activities, you recognise that middle leaders' are not using work scrutiny well enough to evaluate the impact of these actions on pupils' learning. Because of this, there have not only been missed opportunities to evaluate precisely what impact teaching over time is having on pupils' learning, but you have not identified and addressed specific weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum. To drive forward improvements in teaching at a pace, these leaders need to develop and sharpen further their knowledge and skills when checking pupils' work. You must use this information to ensure teachers get the help they need to improve teaching.

You know you have the capacity within school to improve teaching. You have taken strategic decisions to employ experienced teachers and to move staff in September to ensure you make better use of the expertise within school to improve teaching. You agree that since the inspection you have planned training for all staff, which has improved teaching to an extent, but not as quickly as it would have if you had identified and tackled specific weaknesses in teaching for individual teachers.

You agree there is still much to do to ensure teachers fully understand the requirements of the new national curriculum, which you have chosen to follow. Our work scrutiny showed that pupils need more opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding in writing and mathematics. Fast coverage of the curriculum and slavish adherence to schemes of work are creating gaps in pupils' learning and misconceptions are not being addressed, before pupils are moved on to the next stage of learning, particularly in mathematics.

In lessons pupils are more clear about what they have to do and what they are expected to achieve, because of the way teachers plan lessons and mark pupils' work. You have made checks on how well teachers comply with policy and procedure, which means there is greater consistency in the way teachers mark pupils' work. However, some teachers still do not ensure pupils follow the guidance they provide or correct errors in their work.

Governors have an accurate view of the school and continue to focus on making checks on progress with the action plan and the impact of actions. This includes visits to school. They challenge you about the progress pupils are making and you provide them with the information to do this. They continue to address their training needs to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to lead, manage and challenge the school effectively.

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 governors employ an external school improvement partner to support and challenge leaders and to provide an objective, external view of leaders' effectiveness and the school's progress.

The academy trust supports the school and governing body well. It is working with the school to secure good appointments to teaching.

The school makes effective use of local partnerships to improve teaching and to moderate pupils' writing to secure accuracy of assessment.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wakefield and the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**