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Ms J Gazeley
Principal
City Road Primary Academy
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Dear Ms Gazeley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to City Road Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 29 June 2015, 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 academy 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 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 academy should take further action to:

- embed the links with the Greet teaching school alliance in order to secure effective ongoing teacher professional development.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal and vice-principal, the consultant executive principal, the chair of the over-arching Academy Trust and the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, middle leaders and pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The inspector observed several lessons accompanied by senior leaders, and scrutinised documents including action plans, notes of monitoring visits by external consultants and records of governing body meetings.

Main findings

There is evidence of clear teacher written feedback to pupils with subsequent good pupil responses, leading to good academic standards of writing in Year 5. Teachers are providing specific tasks that encourage pupils to use their own imagination and ideas. There is still a tendency to 'model' good writing examples and then leave those examples on display as pupils try their own versions; this can limit pupils' creative responses. Pupils are writing extended reports on science and geography which is helping to steadily increase the quality as well as quantity of writing. Middle leaders understand the reasons behind the introduction of new initiatives. They have identified shortfalls in previous provision and can see how new approaches are targeted at those shortfalls. These leaders are fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching through lesson observations and work scrutiny.

The external review of governance has yet to take place; some delay has arisen as the academy seeks to find a reviewer that satisfies the requirements of the Academy trust and the Department for Education. However some governor training is taking place from the executive principal. The records of governing body meetings are not evaluative enough to track whether pupil outcomes or teaching quality is improving in different year groups, or how well the areas of strengths are developing and how well weaknesses are being eliminated in the school. It is not clear how pupil premium funding is directly improving outcomes for economically disadvantaged pupils. There is a substantial amount of targeted support involving additional teachers that is helping to accelerate progress of underachieving pupils.

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

External support

Governors had already recognised that performance in 2014 was causing concern and therefore recruited an external executive principal in January 2015 to strengthen leadership and governance. His experience has combined well with the existing leadership team, allowing the swift introduction of a number of new teaching strategies. There is an agreement with a teaching school alliance that is beginning to contribute to teacher professional development, including support for newly qualified teachers. The Academy trust is part of Birmingham City University, with access to initial teacher training expertise.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority