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Mr A Mitchell
Headteacher
Manor Court Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Mitchell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manor Court Community Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 9 November 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the Collaborative Academies Trust are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy. The academy should take further action to ensure that:

- it immediately improves the quality and implementation of its policies to safeguard pupils and to promote their welfare, health and safety
- senior leaders and teachers can accurately demonstrate the progress that pupils make
- pupils are not hindered in their progress because they are in the early stages of learning English
- the local governing body receives more training and support so that they can fulfil their statutory duties
- staff share best practice with other local schools that are good or better.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the academy council, representatives of the local governing body, and the trust's governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the academy's action plan. You and I jointly visited all classes in Years 1 to 6 to observe pupils' behaviour, and to see the impact of the actions taken by senior leaders to improve the consistency of pupils' learning. In addition, we jointly observed phonics being taught in Year 1. I scrutinised a range of documentation including that related to safeguarding and pupils' achievements, and the governing body minutes. In addition, I considered the outcomes of moderation activities conducted by the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection in March 2015, two new teachers have been employed. In September 2015, the academy appointed two new members of the senior leadership team with direct responsibility for the curriculum and mathematics. A review of governance has taken place and a new Chair of the Governing Body took office in September 2015. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed for January 2016.

Main findings

The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure and to provide for their welfare, health and safety is inadequate. The trust and the local governing body have not ensured that all of the safeguarding requirements are met. They do not robustly check for themselves that the quality and implementation of matters relating to safeguarding are as good as they need to be. For example, during this visit, it emerged that the single central record is not compliant with statutory requirements. Governors had not checked that this had been done to the standard required.

The academy's safeguarding policy on the website is out of date and the governing body has been too slow to ratify an updated version. This meant that it could not be read or used by staff for over half a term. Although staff received basic child protection and safeguarding training in September 2015, it was not good enough. They do not fully appreciate the latest guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, published by the Department for Education in July 2015. In particular, they do not understand some aspects of their duties to keep children safe: for example, the 'Prevent' duty (to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism) and the signs related to female genital mutilation, or their statutory duty to report on it.

Senior leaders and the governing body do not know how well or quickly the academy is moving to provide a good quality of education for pupils. Neither they nor the trust have ensured that pupils are making the rapid progress that they need in order to catch up quickly on missed learning. Academy development plans do not make clear what actions are taking place, or whether they are working well. In particular,

it is not clear how actions will have a direct impact on the acceleration of pupils' progress. This limits the ability of the governing body to hold the academy's leaders to account.

Academy leaders cannot accurately demonstrate the amount of progress that pupils have made since the last inspection. The assessment system is new from September 2015. It has the potential to be a useful tool, but it is currently not enabling the academy to identify pupils' progress in their learning. While the evidence seen in classes and pupils' books during this visit shows that some pupils are making progress, academy leaders are not yet able to analyse how much.

Teachers have assessed the progress that pupils in their class are making during the first half of the term. Those who have done this regularly have been able to see and record the incremental steps that pupils have made in their learning. These teachers are generally those who are more experienced and more confident in making these judgements. Senior leaders have not ensured that all class teachers are recording pupils' progress regularly enough into the central electronic system, nor that these entries are accurate. The lack of rigorous and frequent moderation means that the academy cannot demonstrate the amount of progress that pupils are making. In particular, newly qualified teachers lack speedy and robust support to moderate their judgements. The senior leaders with responsibilities for mathematics and English are also class teachers and do not have sufficient time allocated to this important leadership work. In addition, staff new to their leadership roles have not seen enough examples of outstanding teaching and leadership in their areas of responsibility. This means that they are not well placed to help you drive academy improvement.

Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is now taught more frequently. During our visit to classrooms, we saw pupils engaging with gusto and enthusiasm when repeating the letter sounds they were learning. We also saw that some pupils, who are at the very early stages of learning English, do not always have translations provided as promptly as they might. This hampers the progress they make in lessons.

Classrooms are orderly. Teachers and other adults are applying the academy's rules and systems to support learning regularly and consistently. This is a big improvement since the last inspection. It is helping to ensure that everyone has a shared sense of purpose, and has raised expectations of what good learning and pupils' behaviour looks like. For example, teachers' marking and the methods used to provide feedback to pupils are increasingly effective in helping them to improve their work. You and the rest of the staff have worked determinedly to get to this point. However, we agree that classroom staff have not seen enough examples of outstanding provision to learn and share from best practice in other schools.

Pupils told me that they liked the new 'ready to learn' system to improve behaviour. They said it is making a big difference in making pupils think more about their

behaviour in lessons. They reported that low-level disruption is now rare so that they can concentrate better and are learning more during lessons. This concurs with the behaviour seen during my inspection visit and our joint visits to classrooms. Pupils also said that they now better understand what they have to do to improve their work through the newly introduced 'learning steps' displayed on classroom walls. These and the other new schemes are helping to support their work, improving their enjoyment of learning and, in particular, creating a desire for them to read more often and more widely.

Although not suggested at the last inspection, the local governing body commissioned an external review of its work. It has helped members to reflect on their skills and facilitated their reorganisation. They are aware that new members need further training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities, and have scheduled this to happen in their action plan.

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

The trust has not ensured that safeguarding is robust and that the academy can accurately demonstrate pupils' progress, including by different groups of pupils. It has provided some support for the academy, such as producing a draft model safeguarding policy, but has not ensured that this support is implemented speedily.

Moderation activities conducted by Somerset local authority last year for the areas of learning and development for children in the early years have been helpful to the academy. They also confirmed that leaders had made accurate judgements about the standards that older pupils reached.

External support from an experienced mathematics specialist has also proved to be invaluable in providing teachers with good-quality professional development so that they are more ready to teach the new mathematics curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Somerset, the Regional Schools' Commissioner and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector