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Mr Damien Keogh
Headteacher
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Western Avenue
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Dear Mr Keogh

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter and St Paul, Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 11 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 second 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 St Gilbert of Sempringham Catholic Academy 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 school.

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that urgent action is taken to:

- revise the academy's action plan to ensure that it includes actions which will lead to rapid improvements and enable governors to hold senior leaders to account for their work
- ensure the evaluation of the academy's current position is accurate
- enable middle leaders to work together to drive improvements which will impact positively on the quality of teaching and pupil progress
- ensure that senior leaders are held to account for the accuracy of information entered into the 'Go4Schools' information system, and that the academy's information about pupil progress can be relied upon.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the actions taken since the first monitoring inspection conducted in July 2015. I spoke, by telephone, to the Chairperson of St Gilbert of Sempringham Catholic Academy Trust. I evaluated the executive summary of the academy's self-evaluation and the academy's action plan. I met, formally, with a group of pupils, some of whom I met at the first monitoring visit. I also met with the two lead practitioners, new to role, and a group of middle leaders. I conducted a brief learning walk and, along with the assistant headteacher, observed learning within science and mathematics. Accompanied by a sixth form learner, I observed pupils during breaktime.

Context

The leadership team of the academy has been restructured to reflect the renewed focus on teaching, learning and pupils' progress. Two lead practitioners have been promoted from within the academy. The leadership of science has changed. Two newly qualified teachers joined the academy in September 2015. A new Chair of the Governing Body is now in place.

Main findings

The results at Key Stage 4 in 2015 were too low and were not as anticipated. The predicted results that you shared with me in July 2015 were inaccurate. The government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress for GCSE, were not met and achievement in many subjects was too low. The progress made by pupils within mathematics was inadequate. Too many pupils eligible for additional funding did not achieve as well as others within the academy.

Leaders' self-evaluation is too optimistic about the current position of the academy. You need to address this and ensure that leaders of all levels, and all staff, have a precision of understanding of the barriers that exist, to ensure that the academy becomes a good school. This is particularly the case when judging outcomes. There is still significant underachievement within mathematics, but this is not the sole issue; pupils, including those eligible for additional funding, underperform in many other subject areas.

The way in which pupils make progress within English is developing as a strength within the academy; pupils are increasingly making the progress they should. The subject leader is aware of the performance gaps and is continuing the strategic work to address these. You have recognised the potential of this subject leader and she is now a lead practitioner.

The academy action plan has not been effectively adapted in the light of the outcomes in 2015. The current actions within the plan are not the ones that will ensure rapid improvement. It is time for you to take stock and focus on the actions that will make the most difference. Currently, your senior leaders are not regularly held to account for making sure the actions for which they are responsible have the impact that they should. This must change.

The 'Go4Schools' data system has improved the way in which leaders and teachers can access achievement information in order to plan teaching and monitor pupils' progress. Middle leaders appreciate this system and pupils said that they now receive more information about their personal targets and what they are doing well in order to achieve these. This data system is useful only if the information going into it is accurate. Currently, the information on the achievement of pupils cannot be relied upon. This academy will not be on track to become a good school unless this issue is addressed quickly.

You are developing the middle leadership of the academy. The majority of these leaders are keen and ambitious to drive the improvement required for the academy to become a good school. These leaders told me that they would relish the opportunity to work together; they wanted to be 'utilised as a collective'. It is time to work out where your leadership strength is and then decide how to best use it to ensure that things improve quickly.

You have addressed the significant underperformance of some staff within the academy and the setting of targets for teachers to improve is increasingly rigorous. Training is focused on teaching and learning and this is appreciated by staff. Middle leaders said that they felt that training was now more relevant, particularly when staff were able to share good practice. Lead practitioners have been appointed from within the academy and have been involved in coaching and delivering training. The subject leaders of English and modern foreign languages need to share the Catholic leadership training that they have experienced. The underperformance of some staff still needs to be addressed. The impact of training and external support needs to be more effectively evaluated.

The governing body are unable to hold leaders to account effectively because the academy action plan is not fit for purpose. Governors have an unrealistic view of the current position of the academy because self-evaluation is inaccurate. The new Chair of the Governing Body has been in post for a few weeks. He is ambitious and is keen for governors to take a more systematic approach and to focus on the things that will make the difference. He is correct to take this approach. It is essential that the new Chair of the Governing Body holds leaders to account effectively so that the actions for which they are responsible take place and have impact.

I intend to conduct a further monitoring visit.

External support

The St Gilbert of Sempringham Catholic Academy Trust is not making sure that the academy is taking effective action to become a good school. The Chair of the Trust does not have an accurate view of the academy.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector