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Mrs Sarah Rayson
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Dear Mrs Sarah Rayson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Bartholomew's Church of England Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 18 January 2016, 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 June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the Diocese of Coventry Multi-Academy Trust are 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:

- make sure that teachers use assessment information consistently across classes to monitor the progress of different groups, particularly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the most able
- build on the work already started to focus on the quality of teaching in those classes where pupils are not making enough progress
- utilise fully the skills of the most effective and skilled teachers to influence and develop the work of other staff, and monitor the impact of this support more robustly so that the quality of teaching is at least good in all classes.

Evidence

In addition to visiting lessons and meeting with you and the executive headteacher to observe teaching and to look through pupils' workbooks, I met with some parents at the start of the inspection, spoke to members of staff and leaders, and held a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body. I met with a group of pupils to discuss their problem-solving skills in mathematics and had lunch with some pupils to discuss their views about the academy and their behaviour and safety. I also met with one of the diocese's school improvement partners. The academy's improvement plan and subject action plans for English and mathematics were evaluated and I considered the academy's self-review of its progress since the inspection in June 2015. The academy's single central record was scrutinised to check the effectiveness of staff vetting and safeguarding procedures.

Context

There have been a significant number of staff changes since the academy's inspection in June 2015. Three class teachers joined the academy in September 2015, one of whom was a newly qualified teacher. One class teacher left in December 2015, replaced by a class teacher new to the academy in January 2016. Two teaching assistants have left and one joined the academy in November 2015. The Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) appointed a new business manager who works part-time at St Bartholomew's and part of the time at another academy in the MAT.

Main findings

You and the executive headteacher, together with the governing body, have made sure that the academy has effective strategic plans that guide leaders and staff towards sustained improvement. The academy's action plan and subject action plans identify the right priorities for improvement to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Leaders' evaluations of the impact of their actions to raise standards are accurate and are based on routine and increasingly rigorous checks of teaching and pupils' work and progress.

Staff morale is high and the parents spoken to by Her Majesty's Inspector are very positive about the academy. Since the inspection in June 2015, there has been a combined effort and realisation by staff and governors that they need to set more ambitious targets for pupils to aim for. Assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress is now being shared systematically through regular reviews of pupils' progress. Assessment information is accessible to staff and the most consistently effective teachers are using this information to provide the right level of challenge for pupils in their lessons. Nonetheless, there remain pockets of teaching that still require improvement and gaps remain between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally, particularly in reading and mathematics. The most-able pupils should also be doing better. Leaders rightly

recognise that pupils who have the potential to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not always being challenged enough to do so.

You work closely with the executive headteacher and the diocesan school improvement partner to support and challenge other leaders and to help them monitor and support teachers. The range of monitoring and the support offered to teachers and teaching assistants are proving to be mostly effective. There are early signs of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in those classes where pupils were previously underachieving. You have rightly identified the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and have already put in place individualised teaching plans for staff that require the most support to improve the consistency and quality of their teaching. The involvement of the strongest teachers in supporting other staff is currently patchy and must now be strengthened. Sharper evaluations are required of the support provided for teachers to make sure that its impact has a more sustained effect on pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

The governing body and senior leaders now undertake regular, half-termly meetings and reviews of the progress being made by the academy. Each governor has a clear responsibility that is linked to one of the priorities set out in the academy's improvement plan. Governors have a good understanding of the standards achieved in each phase of the academy. All staff who manage subjects or phases of the academy now have clear and well-defined roles and responsibilities. As a result, there is greater clarity and direction for the academy's improvement. Leaders, governors and staff are in a stronger position than at the time of the previous inspection in June 2015 to be able to monitor and evaluate the impact of their work on sustaining improvement to teaching and pupils' achievement.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved very well since the previous inspection. Pupils are attentive and engaged in lessons. They try hard and persevere with tasks and activities, and they cooperate with other pupils very well during class and group discussions.

External support

Following the inspection in June 2015, the MAT acted decisively to appoint the executive headteacher. This added impetus to the academy's improvement. The executive headteacher was appointed before the previous inspection in June 2015 and took up her post in September 2015. Working alongside the head of school, senior leaders undertake accurate reviews of teaching and learning. With the support and challenge offered by the diocesan school improvement partner, effective systems and processes have been put in place to secure accurate evaluations of the academy's work. Improved and regular monitoring, combined with much sharper evaluations of teaching, help to identify the right priorities aimed at taking the academy forward on its journey to becoming a good academy. The MAT and academy leaders have maintained productive and positive working relationships with Coventry local authority. In addition, staff and leaders visit other

partner schools and academies in and beyond the MAT, which is helping them to see and share good practice. Regular moderation meetings with other schools and academies are also providing reliable assessments of pupils' achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chief Executive of the Diocese of Coventry Multi-Academy Trust, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Coventry, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Coventry City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector