

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

12 October 2015

Ms Sarah Whitlock
Principal
St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy
High Street
Burton Latimer
Kettering
NN15 5RL

Dear Ms Whitlock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy, Burton Latimer

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 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 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders and a group of teachers and teaching assistants to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with small groups of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I held a meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. I made short visits with you to nine classes. I evaluated the academy's improvement plan and also considered results from the 2015 national assessments. I looked at the academy's self-evaluation document and minutes from meetings of the governing body.

Context

You joined the academy as Principal at the start of the summer term and following the section 5 inspection that judged the school to require improvement. A new bursar joined the school in July 2015. The deputy principal is currently absent from school and is due to return in December 2015.

Main findings

You recognise that much work is needed if the school is to become good by the time of its next section 5 inspection. The scale of the task is demonstrated by the very poor results achieved in the 2015 Key Stage 2 national assessments. Test scores overall show a marked dip in the proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics compared with the year before. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in the English, punctuation and grammar tests also fell sharply. These results, indicative of weak teaching and assessment over time, reflect the inadequate progress pupils made over the course of Key Stage 2. As a result, the academy did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2. Boys and disadvantaged pupils attained particularly poorly. The 2015 Key Stage 2 results are significantly worse than the 2014 results reported in the previous section 5 inspection.

Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check and the Key Stage 1 tests were more positive. For example, all Year 2 pupils attained the expected level in reading. Improvements were also seen in writing and mathematics.

As the academy's new Principal, you have only had one full term to bring about the rapid improvements needed. In this time, you have won the support of staff while making clear that past performance has not been good enough. Teachers and teaching assistants described to me the strong sense of purpose you have brought to the academy. Lines of accountability have been sharpened and monitoring procedures have been formalised. You are drawing on your previous success as a headteacher improving a school to good.

However, it has taken time for you and other senior leaders to unpick the precise weaknesses which have held the academy back and to formulate the improvement plan needed to address these weaknesses effectively. As a result, the pace of improvement has not been quick enough to indicate that the school is on track to become good by the time of its next section 5 inspection.

While some actions have been taken to improve the school, for example through the new marking policy and changes to the literacy curriculum, many of the planned actions have either only just begun or have yet to be implemented. Hence, while there are tentative signs of improvements in mathematics, it is too early to assess whether recent improvements in teachers' use of assessment are making enough

difference. You remain concerned about the effectiveness of the mathematics curriculum and intend to secure external support to see how it might be improved.

Nevertheless, pupils are beginning to benefit from more stable staffing than before. The pupils I met in Year 4 said they were particularly pleased to have a permanent teacher after the regular changes they experienced in Year 3.

The academy's improvement plan sets out the right priorities and is strengthened by clear milestones and lines of accountability. However, given the results in the Year 6 national tests, the plan needs to be revised to give greater priority to boys' attainment and to narrowing gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally. While you have introduced personal improvement plans for all teachers, these do not routinely focus on how improvements to teaching will raise the attainment of underachieving pupils, and particularly boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who need to make rapid progress in order to catch up.

Governors recognise that they have previously accepted information too readily from school leaders, with insufficient challenge. They have strengthened their skills through training and restructured their committees to ensure that they are sufficiently effective in holding school leaders to account, including with regard to the management of teachers' performance. Recent minutes from meetings of the governing body show that governors have become skilled in asking good questions. Governors plan to increase their monitoring of pupils' progress by attending the academy's pupil progress meetings, though the first of these meetings has not yet taken place.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I recommend a further visit to the academy by an Her Majesty's Inspector in the spring term. In the meantime, you agreed to send me a succinct evaluation of the impact of actions taken to improve the academy at the start of the spring term, 2016.

External support

So far, the academy has had little external support. However, training for middle and senior leaders has been booked to take place this term through the 5 Wells Teaching Schools Alliance. A senior leader from the Diocese of Peterborough Board of Education has recently visited the academy to verify the accuracy of your judgements about the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector