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David Williams
Executive headteacher
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Dear Mr Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Weavers Close Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 September 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the Diocese of Leicester 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 school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that there is clarity regarding roles and responsibilities between the trust and the governing body, particularly in relation to safeguarding
- ensure that the school's action plan contains clear success criteria that are broken down into measurable milestones for improvement, so that governors and trust leaders can more stringently hold leaders to account for progress against key actions
- ensure that information on the school's website is up to date and provides clarity for parents
- provide opportunities for leaders and teachers to learn from best practice in the trust.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the school's co-headteachers, three representatives from the governing body, including the chair, and the director of education from the Diocese of Leicester, to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring visit. I reviewed the academy's self-evaluation and action plan, achievement data, records of the monitoring of teaching and documents relating to roles and responsibilities in the trust. I also scrutinised the record of checks on staff and the school's safeguarding records. Accompanied by senior leaders I made short visits to lessons, looked at the quality of learning in a range of pupils' workbooks and spoke with pupils about their learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has undergone significant changes to staffing, including leadership. The previous headteacher resigned in October 2015 and was replaced by an interim headteacher, who left in July 2016. An executive headteacher and two co-headteachers were appointed in September 2016. The school has a new chair of governors, and four additional new governors. Five new teachers joined the school in September 2016.

Main findings

Changes to leadership and staffing have limited the progress that the school has made since the previous monitoring visit. You and other leaders believe that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improved under the leadership of the interim headteacher, but that these improvements have not been sustained because most of the teaching staff are new to the school or have changed classes.

You and the co-headteachers have an accurate view of the school's current effectiveness. You recognise that not enough progress has been made to ensure that the school will be judged good at the next inspection. You have quickly established a set of basic expectations and have shared these with teachers and teaching assistants, but they have not yet resulted in pupils making consistently good progress.

You have drawn up a new action plan for this academic year, but have not updated the school's self-evaluation to reflect the school's current situation. Therefore the action plan does not correspond closely enough to your evaluation. You are realistic about the challenges ahead and have set ambitious targets for the school's improvement. However, your action plan does not include clear, measurable steps to help you reach these targets. This means that governors and leaders from the trust are less able to hold you and other leaders to account for the progress the school is making.

You and the co-headteachers have begun the process of monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching in the school. For the most part this activity has focused on the progress that pupils make. Some of this activity has been less focused, however.

Your co-headteachers are new in post. Like you, they are realistic about the challenges that lie ahead and are determined to ensure that the school improves. They do not currently work with other leaders within the trust or have the opportunity to learn from best practice elsewhere in order to further develop their leadership skills.

In our visits to classes and our scrutiny of pupils' work, it was evident that teaching does not routinely ensure that pupils make rapid progress. In some instances, pupils are held back because they are waiting for teachers and teaching assistants to help them or to check their work. Teaching does not routinely take pupils' starting points into account when planning learning, or ensure that pupils have the skills and resources to move themselves on when appropriate. In some classes, resources are not used well enough to support pupils' learning. The most able are not routinely challenged in their work. Too little account is taken of their needs and teachers do not ensure that they are adequately stretched by the work they do.

The new marking and feedback policy is ensuring that there is more consistent marking across the school. There is not yet a consistent approach to ensuring that spelling and grammar errors are corrected, however. Pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.

There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills, in English and in the wider curriculum. Where there are opportunities to practise writing in subjects other than English, teachers do not provide clear success criteria that enable pupils to develop their literacy skills.

Outcomes for pupils declined in 2015 and the school did not meet the floor standards, the government's minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average. Progress in mathematics was well below that seen nationally. In 2016, pupils' attainment remained well below national averages. Less than a third of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. While attainment in writing was closer to the national average, in reading and mathematics it was well below. You acknowledge that too few pupils made adequate progress from their starting points and as a result they were not well prepared for secondary school. In 2015, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development rose to be above the national average. This measure fell to slightly below the national level in 2016.

At key stage 1, pupils' attainment in 2015 was in line with national averages, although there were significant differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers. In 2016, the proportion reaching the expected standard was well below average. Attainment in phonics rose in 2015 to be in line with the national average, although disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as their peers. The overall proportion who have achieved this standard this year has risen. In 2015, the overall progress of disadvantaged pupils, and their progress in reading and writing, was well below average at key stage 2. While there are some improvements in the progress that these pupils made in 2016, you recognise that across the school their progress is inconsistent, and directly linked to the quality of teaching. The most able pupils made progress in line with national averages in 2015. In 2016, the proportion achieving above the expected standard in their different subjects was well below that seen nationally.

Our observations of learning showed that the vast majority of pupils were on task and engaged in their learning. In the assembly I visited, pupils listened respectfully and joined in enthusiastically with the singing. You recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning and develop the skills and resilience to be successful learners.

The changes to leadership have extended to governors. The new chair of governors is a national leader of governance, and several members of the governing body are also new. While many bring skill and expertise to their role, you recognise that there is more to do to ensure that all governors undergo training and develop the skills and knowledge to hold you and other leaders rigorously to account.

External support

The Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT) has continued to carry out termly reviews of the school. As a result of these reviews, the trust recognised that urgent changes were needed to the leadership of the school and rightly took decisive action. For example, it reduced the responsibilities of the governing body. However, there is some uncertainty among governors about who has responsibility for safeguarding. This must be resolved urgently, and the school's policy should be amended to reflect this.

Leaders from DLAT recognised that in its original model, there was insufficient capacity to drive school improvement from within the trust. They have recently appointed a chief executive officer for the trust who brings experience from working for another diocesan multi-academy trust. However, it is too soon to comment on the impact of these changes. The trust has not done enough to broker effective support from partner schools. While headteachers attend meetings and briefing sessions, there are too few opportunities for leaders and teachers to learn from the best practice in the trust.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leicester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector