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25 October 2016

Mrs Julie Wright  
Principal  
Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy  
Eliot Street  
Nechells  
Birmingham  
B7 5LB

Dear Mrs Wright

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 11 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, the E-ACT multi-academy trust and the school's raising achievement board are 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:

- sustain improvements to the standards that pupils reach, particularly in literacy
- encourage pupils to read more widely and often by providing more opportunities for them to read varied and challenging books and texts
- build on the improvements made to the quality of teaching by raising still further teachers' expectations and making sure that all teachers provide the right level of challenge in lessons
- build on the good teaching in key stage 1 to make sure that pupils continue to achieve well when they start key stage 2.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the vice principal and the chair of the raising achievement board (governors), who is also the regional education director of the E-Act Trust for the Midlands, to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection in March 2016. I visited all classes, including the early years, with you and the vice principal to observe some teaching and learning. We spoke to pupils during lessons and looked at their work in books. I spoke to some parents and carers at the start of the day and to pupils at breaktime. I checked staff vetting and safeguarding procedures.

## **Context**

You were appointed principal of the school and joined in September 2016. The vice principal has been seconded to the school from an outstanding primary school and joined in October 2016. The chair of the raising achievement board joined the school in September 2016.

## **Main findings**

You, senior leaders, staff and the board are focusing on the right priorities for improvement to raise standards and improve teaching and learning. There is increased accountability so that every member of staff is in no doubt about what is expected. The previous principal, you and the board have put in place some well-devised structures that enable senior and middle leaders to monitor, challenge and support teachers so they continually improve their practice. Since the inspection in March 2016, a great deal has been done to monitor and identify the strongest teachers so they can influence and improve the teaching that requires most improvement. You and the previous principal have done this by deploying the most effective teachers and leaders to work alongside and mentor staff to improve their practice. The board works closely with you to bring other partners, advisers and strong leaders to the school, both within and beyond the trust from other schools or academies. This is having an impact. Assessment information is now much sharper, detailed and accurate; the support provided for teachers is effective; and there is evidence of improvement in pupils' achievement.

Leaders, staff and the board recognise that there are still too many pupils who do not reach age-related levels, particularly in reading. Pupils' writing in key stages 1 and 2 is improving but outcomes for reading are not as strong compared with writing. I spoke to parents and some pupils about their work and they are pleased with the improvements that you and the staff have made to help them read and write independently. Some parents would like their children to read more books or to change them more often and I agree.

Early phonics is now being taught more consistently in the early years and key stage 1. However, pupils do not read often enough in the school or at home, which

slows their development of speech, language and vocabulary. There is some good practice. The school library is a good resource and I can see that, in every class, traditional and modern literature is taught and celebrated. This helps pupils to discuss stories, sing rhymes, write their own stories and factual accounts and diaries, or recite from a range of texts. As most of the pupils are learning English as an additional language, teachers and support staff provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas that broaden their use of spoken language and vocabulary. However, some lessons do not allow pupils to answer questions fully to extend their vocabulary or to read aloud from challenging texts. There is scope to improve standards in reading by providing pupils with opportunities to read more challenging books and texts and experience a broader range of authors, genres and vocabulary.

An improvement since the previous inspection is the way assessment is being used to check pupils' achievements. The information about pupils' progress and performance is more accurate now than previously. This information enables leaders to check pupils' progress regularly and with more precision through the scrutiny of pupils' work in books and when monitoring lessons. Teachers and support staff receive regular feedback following lesson visits by leaders. You and the vice principal are pinpointing key areas for improvement during lesson monitoring and these are followed up routinely to ensure that staff act on the guidance being offered. You have acted quickly since joining the school to make sure that assessment information is used to provide more challenging targets for pupils and teachers to aim for. However, some of the teaching is not challenging enough, particularly for pupils who are capable of reaching age-related standards. For example, time is sometimes wasted in lessons because the questions posed by teachers and the tasks provided are not challenging, so the pace of learning slows.

Observations of teaching, leaders' monitoring reports, current assessments and work in pupils' books show improvement in relation to most of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. For example, in the early years the most recent outcome measures are improving and edging closer to the national average, with 65% of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. This is a significant improvement on the previous year's outcomes. The teaching of phonics has improved so that children are on course to reach higher standards in early reading and writing. You have also taken steps to make sure that phonics is taught in the Nursery. This is helping Nursery children to recognise letters and sounds and to read and write sooner than was previously the case. The teaching in key stage 1 has improved and it is strong in Year 2. It is also strong in Years 5 and 6. Pupils are already making much more progress in key stage 1 than previously and there are pockets of good achievement evident in key stage 2 so that standards are improving steadily. Nevertheless, there is still some teaching that is relatively weaker in key stage 2 which may put at risk the achievement and progress of pupils as they leave key stage 1 and move into key stage 2. This is particularly important for the most able pupils as increasingly more pupils in key stage 1 reach age-related standards.

There has been marked improvement to pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. This was also an area for improvement reported at the time of the last inspection. The measures taken to improve behaviour have been effective. Parents agree and pupils say that they like the way, as one put it, 'things are better organised'. For example, pupils told me that it is much better now that they have to line up when the bell goes in the morning or at breaktimes, because it is calmer and helps them prepare better for their lessons. I found pupils to be polite, courteous and respectful throughout the day's inspection.

### **External support**

The board is well informed and keeps in regular contact with the school's leaders. The trust and board provide a good balance of challenge and support. There is robust scrutiny of the work that leaders carry out through regular reviews of progress, focusing, rightly, on improving pupil outcomes and teaching.

Since the previous inspection, the trust has acted effectively to ensure continuity of leadership and this has been strengthened by involving other strong leaders from good and outstanding academies and schools to provide support, training and opportunities for staff to see and share best practice. Peer-to-peer reviews, mentoring and coaching are already having an impact on improving teaching, although there is still more to be done to ensure that teachers in all lessons provide their right level of challenge.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive of the academy trust and chair of the raising achievement board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**