

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 November 2016

Mr Andrew Kilpatrick OBE
Interim Headteacher
St Edward's Church of England School & Sixth Form College
London Road
Romford
Essex
RM7 9NX

Dear Mr Kilpatrick

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Edward's Church of England School & Sixth Form College

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 February 2016. At the section 5 inspection before that, the school was also judged to require improvement. My monitoring inspection 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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the governing body fulfils all of its obligations, including keeping records of staff employment checks and the safeguarding policy up to date, and ensuring that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is properly spent and accounted for
- undertake a thorough review of teaching, with a particular focus on challenge for the most able pupils and support for those who are least able.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, and representatives of the governing body, diocese and the local authority. These meetings were to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. School

records were scrutinised, including employment checks made on recently appointed staff. Consideration was given to the 2016 GCSE results, and the school website was examined. Visits were made to 16 classrooms, where learning and teaching were observed in English, mathematics, science and music. Most of the classroom visits were conducted jointly with the head of science or with one of two deputy headteachers nominated by the interim headteacher.

Context

Following the section 5 inspection, a support partnership operated with Seven Kings School in Redbridge. The headteacher of St Edward's resigned in May and the partnership with Seven Kings was terminated. Consequently, the senior deputy headteacher became acting headteacher and an executive headteacher was seconded part time from the Maltings Academy in Witham, Essex. Further change came in July, when the executive headteacher's secondment was ended. The current interim headteacher started in September and the senior deputy headteacher reverted to his substantive role. Two new deputy headteachers took up post in September; one was appointed from outside the school and the other was promoted from an assistant headteacher role at St Edward's.

The governing body intends to advertise for and appoint a permanent headteacher within the next year.

Main findings

The proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics in 2016 was a clear improvement on the previous year. However, this year group as a whole was of significantly above-average ability. This considered, they made no better progress in their eight best subjects than should have been expected. Although both did better than in 2015, girls continued to outperform boys significantly. Disadvantaged boys made considerably less progress than disadvantaged girls. Overall, disadvantaged pupils made considerably less progress than other pupils nationally.

The 2016 results suggested that the most able pupils made better progress than other groups of pupils in the school. However, observations during the inspection suggested that not enough challenge is being provided for the most able pupils during classroom activities. Equally, insufficient support is being offered to pupils who are least able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In many of the classes visited, work provided was 'one size fits all abilities'. In key stage 3 science, printed workbooks were used. These consisted of worksheets that were not adapted or varied according to pupil need. In other classes, all pupils were required to complete the same tasks at the same time. The consequence of this was that the most able completed the work easily and quickly, and the least able struggled to complete tasks.

Too much teaching seen did not spark pupils' enthusiasm or stretch their thinking. Teachers' questioning was often closed down, in that it required pupils to give short

factual answers rather than engage in dialogue among themselves or with their teacher. In English, resources were poorly managed. In one class, pupils were sharing a play text between four or five; in another class, more texts were available but in different editions, making it difficult because page numbers were different. Too many exercise books belonging to middle- and lower-ability pupils were characterised by incomplete work or careless presentation. This had not been challenged firmly by teachers. Not one teaching assistant was seen working in the classrooms visited during the inspection. As well as limiting the learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, this also makes classroom management difficult for some teachers. For example, in a practical science lesson, the teacher had to manage a large Year 7 class without any other adult support. The interim headteacher agreed that the limited classroom support on offer to teachers and pupils is of concern.

During observations in classrooms, we considered the quality of feedback and the use of targets to set high expectations. In both cases, we saw inconsistencies. While the school's 'green sticker' system is used by many staff, its effectiveness is limited because the purpose of the stickers is unclear. One teacher explained that a green sticker would be given to every pupil at the end of a project, regardless of the quality of the work or their progress. In a Year 11 top set class, 'aspirational targets' were set at GCSE grade A for half of the students, with the rest set at grades B, C, D or E. No pupil had been set grade A* as their target. Given that these pupils are among the most able in an above-average ability year group, this was surprising. In a Year 9 class, pupils spoke of their targets in terms of the new GCSE grade numbers, but the teacher's records showed targets that were based on old national curriculum levels and sublevels. These inconsistencies are not helping to raise expectations or improve standards.

I appreciated the open and honest conversations that took place with the interim headteacher and senior leaders during the inspection. The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher responsible for teaching and learning have only been in post for six weeks; they already have a realistic view of the school's operation and performance.

It was helpful that seven members of the governing body were available during the inspection and to attend the feedback meeting. As reported, important pre-employment checks on some recently appointed staff had not been logged on the school's records. This was rectified during the inspection, but nevertheless raises questions about the governing body's oversight of safer recruitment and safeguarding generally. Although not due to be reviewed by governors until November 2016, the school's safeguarding policy is out of date because it refers to lapsed guidance and to designated officers who have left the school. This must be rectified immediately. In addition, information about pupil premium spending was not posted on the school website, as is required. This information was presented during the inspection, but it lacks detail and is more statement than analysis. More alarmingly, the information showed that last year the school spent less than two thirds of the money given by the Department for Education to support disadvantaged pupils. This is in addition to the significant underspend of the pupil

premium budget in the previous academic year. A number of planned initiatives were not completed or simply did not happen. The consequence is that the most disadvantaged pupils in the school did not receive the support to which they were entitled. Governors explained that, in the past, senior leaders did not provide them with enough information about this spending. Nevertheless, it is the governing body's statutory duty to arrange for this information to be prepared and published on the school website. This has not been done. An independent review into the school's use of this funding should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

In the months since the section 5 inspection, the school has been subject to numerous changes in leadership and direction which have undoubtedly held back the pace of improvement. Further changes are planned, including staff restructuring and the appointment of a new headteacher. The governing body is fully aware of the need to make significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and management while simultaneously managing these changes.

External support

Although St Edward's is an academy, it is clear that working relationships between the link local authority adviser and the school are close and positive. The local authority and diocesan advisers have an accurate understanding of the school's performance and position. However, the inconsistent pattern of support since the section 5 inspection – with the local authority adviser providing challenge until May and resuming that support at the start of this term – has not helped the instabilities in leadership and management.

In my meeting with governors, the local authority and the diocese, all parties were anxious to maintain the school's unique Christian ethos. All recognise the urgent need to improve the school and the need for the school to reconsider its isolation as a stand-alone academy. They are right to be concerned. Long-standing issues with teaching and with the school's leadership and management must be tackled quickly and urgently if the school is to be considered good at the next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector