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Mr Daniel Steel  
Acting Headteacher  
St Edward's Church of England School & Sixth Form College  
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Dear Mr Steel

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

Following my visit to your school on 14 June 2017, 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 February 2016. At the section 5 inspection before that, the academy was also judged to require improvement. The 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:

- accelerate negotiations regarding the school's status as a stand-alone academy, so that the declines in financial and leadership capacity are arrested and remedied
- tighten arrangements for safety in classrooms throughout the school, and for staff recruitment practices
- ensure that all senior and middle leaders are held firmly to account for all policies

and practices for which they are responsible, including for the quality of teaching.

## **Evidence**

During my visit, I held meetings with you, leaders from the Genesis Education Trust, the chair of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority. We discussed the actions taken since the last inspection and plans for the school's future. I scrutinised school records, including checks made on recently appointed staff. I considered the 2016 GCSE results and examined the school website. I visited classrooms with you, the head of science and the head of design technology.

## **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, a staffing review has taken place which identified further weaknesses in teaching. Consequently, and also because of the school's financial situation, 12 teachers will have left by the end of the summer term. The interim headteacher left the school in April 2017, and as one of the deputy headteachers, you were appointed as acting headteacher. Another deputy headteacher is leaving at the end of the summer term. As a result, the senior leadership team is working at reduced capacity and so support has been brokered from the Genesis Trust, a small group of good and outstanding primary schools in a neighbouring borough. Historically, pupils from these schools have transferred to St Edward's for their secondary education. Plans for St Edward's to join the Genesis Trust are in the early stages. Because of this, the governing body has not advertised for a permanent headteacher. You have been asked to continue in the role until the end of December 2017.

## **Main findings**

Since April 2017, you have worked alongside two consultant leaders from the Genesis Trust to quickly commission a series of reviews about different aspects of the school's work. You have responded to the outcomes of these reviews with commendable candour. The reviews on teaching and learning reported significant inconsistencies, with too much classroom practice less than good. You also identified the continued underachievement of disadvantaged pupils, confirmed in the validated 2016 examination results. Since my last monitoring visit, senior leaders have undertaken a review and evaluation of the pupil premium spending. This evaluation concluded that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is narrowing at St Edward's. This is misguided, because leaders have compared the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils with the outcomes of other pupils at St Edward's, rather than with other pupils nationally. Significant differences are apparent between the performance of boys and girls, and between the performance of different ethnic groups. There is no doubt that much work is still required to smooth the inconsistencies in teaching, so that pupils from all backgrounds make good progress.

In view of the findings of my monitoring inspection in October 2016, a key focus for this visit was the safeguarding of pupils. External reviews commissioned by the Genesis Trust earlier this term identified continued issues with the single central record of personnel checks on staff. These reviews also suggested that staff recruitment practices were lacking in a number of respects. Evidence from this monitoring visit showed that leaders have acted on some of the review recommendations. The single central record is now in better order, with no missing information apparent. Plans are afoot to reorganise individual staff files. However, while all key documents appear to be in place, they are still kept in a disorganised manner. Processes for recruiting, interviewing and appointing staff are inconsistent. The school's safeguarding policies cover all required areas, and appropriate procedures are in place for when serious concerns are raised. However, a number of documents have not been sufficiently tailored to the school, its pupils or its staff. These include health and safety procedures in science and in design and technology. The school's policy on extremism and radicalisation has been copied from another school and does not take account of local risk.

In visits to science and design and technology classrooms, pupils were working sensibly. Important reasons for this were their consistently good behaviour and positive attitudes. However, while in both departments basic safety instructions and reminders are displayed in classrooms, these are not always clear or prominent. Similarly, basic safety equipment such as first aid kits are provided in most practical classrooms but not all are comprehensively maintained or kept in places where they are readily accessible. In some cases, laboratories and workshops are untidy and poorly laid out. Some equipment and resources are stored with insufficient care in preparation rooms. We agreed that heads of subjects have not been held to account tightly enough for these important matters and I was assured that immediate action would be taken to sharpen both policy and practice. Nonetheless, this is further evidence of complacency over time in school leadership at all levels.

Since April, you and the Genesis Trust have been proactive in conducting a root-and-branch analysis of the school's work. Some, but not all of the weakest teaching has been removed. A number of teachers and school leaders are being supported with improvement plans. The curriculum is changing so that key stage 3 is taught over two years, with three years for GCSE courses. The school believes that this will raise standards; as we discussed, remaining and significant challenges with teaching will require tackling, regardless of how the curriculum is organised. While all this is positive, it remains the fact that the numerous changes to the school's senior leadership since the last section 5 inspection have hindered the school's improvement. Put simply, there have been too many changes of direction and too many new starts.

Added to concerns about leadership capacity are worries about the school's budget,

which is in deficit and declining, due to falling roles. It is now 16 months after the section 5 inspection. Swift action must be taken to boost the school's leadership, bring teaching up to a consistently good standard across the school, and stabilise the school's financial situation. As I said in our final meeting, enough is enough. It is clear that the school's current status as a stand-alone academy does not provide the wherewithal for these changes to happen. Leaders and governors believe that the best way forward is for the school to secure partnership and support as part of a larger group of schools, rather than facing these serious issues in isolation.

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 and will be used to inform the timing of the school's next section 5 inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**