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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Paula Burns
Headteacher
Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy (Handsworth)
Havelock Road
Handsworth
Birmingham
West Midlands
B20 3LP

Dear Mrs Burns

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy (Handsworth)

Following my visit to your school on 20 July 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- raise standards in reading by the end of Year 6 and ensure that projected outcomes are accurate
- ensure that teaching is at least good in each year group
- ensure that the curriculum is broader and more balanced by offering a modern foreign language to pupils in key stage 2
- ensure that governors have summary information on how well different pupil groups are doing, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they can evaluate more effectively the impact of additional funding.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and staff, two members of the governing body including the vice-chair, and a challenge adviser from the diocese. We discussed the action taken by the school since the last inspection. I met with a group of pupils. The school action plan was evaluated. Other documentation considered during this inspection included: the school's self-evaluation; information on pupils' performance over time; records of the challenge adviser's visits; information on special educational needs and pupil premium; safeguarding documents; the behaviour policy; and information on governance.

Context

Since the school was last inspected, the early years teacher has left. She was replaced in November 2016. One teacher left at Easter 2017, and two teachers are leaving in July 2017. The school has engaged a challenge adviser through the diocese. Governors have carried out an external review of governance and pupil premium.

Main findings

Current pupils have made strong progress in most year groups in reading, writing and mathematics other than in Year 1 and Year 5. In the most recent tests and assessments, Year 6 pupils achieved improved outcomes in writing and mathematics. Standards were low in reading where pupils did not perform as well as leaders had predicted. There was a large gap between expected and actual outcomes. Outcomes for children improved in early years. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made more rapid progress throughout the school than they have done in recent years.

Middle leaders know well the strengths and areas for development in their areas of responsibility. Some remain relatively new in their posts but they have all supported senior leaders in monitoring teaching and learning. They know assessment information in detail and can identify where groups of pupils are doing well and less well. They have been set appropriate targets for their leadership roles but where they teach several groups – as opposed to having responsibility for a single class – their teaching targets are less clear. Similarly, where leaders share roles, lines of accountability are not clear enough.

The school's development plan is clearly focused on areas for improvement with measurable targets and success criteria. The division between monitoring and evaluation is not clear enough however.

Targets for teachers who have responsibility for classes are clear and linked closely

to aspirational outcomes for pupils. There have been improvements to teaching as a result of more rigorous monitoring. In some instances, this has led to changes of staff. In some year groups, teaching is still not yet good.

Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They are keen for self-improvement and have undertaken a review of governance and a skills audit. This has led to a revision of the committee structure. The curriculum and community committee has been split into two committees. One of these, renamed 'achievement, standards and improvement', can now focus solely on challenging leaders on pupils' outcomes.

The website is much improved and meets almost all of the requirements set by the Department for Education. At the time of the visit, however, the school had still not published its 2016 key stage 2 results.

Leaders have placed an emphasis on improving outcomes for most-able pupils. All high-attaining pupils went on to achieve higher standards or work in greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2016 and outcomes for 2017 are set to be similarly positive. Teachers have been set challenging targets linked to outcomes for most-able pupils.

New systems introduced that are linked to the revised behaviour policy have led to improvements. According to pupils I spoke with, behaviour has significantly improved in the classroom since the last inspection. They also said that behaviour was good at lunchtime when there was a high presence of adults. They reported that behaviour was less good at playtime when fewer adults were present, especially by the amphitheatre. Pupils liked the rewards set out in the behaviour policy very much but felt that sanctions were less effective. They said that pupils behaved especially well in art, which was their favourite subject, but less well in science which they did not enjoy as much. They reported that the sanction of removal from a lesson was an incentive to misbehave in science to avoid the lesson. A small number of pupils received fixed-term exclusions in 2016 and 2017.

Those pupils I spoke with showed a good understanding and appreciation of British values. They were especially aware of the importance of equality and valuing everyone equally.

Assessments in early years are now more accurate as a result of rigorous monitoring with local schools. Outcomes for children have improved, and in the most recent assessments there was no difference in outcomes between disadvantaged and other children. Outcomes for both compared favourably with the previous year's national average.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. Referrals are made in a timely way and the school follows protocols and procedures in line with national guidance and legislation.

The school does not currently offer a modern foreign language to any pupils in key stage 2.

Reports to governors provide a wealth of detail for each year group by subject and pupil group, but do not provide a summary of outcomes overall for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders do not provide a breakdown of outcomes for lower-, middle- and high-attaining pupils.

External support

External support through a challenge adviser from the diocese has focused on improving teaching and supporting leadership and governance. This has led to improvements in these areas, although teaching in some year groups is still not yet good.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector