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15 December 2017

Mr Kevin Barnett  
Freemantle Church of England Community Academy  
Mansion Road  
Freemantle  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO15 3BQ

Dear Mr Barnett

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Freemantle Church of England Community Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 1 December 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 section 5 inspection in September 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 for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed the changes you have made, ensuring that you monitor the impact of your actions on pupils' progress.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met you, other senior leaders and staff, governors, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Hamwic Education Trust, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. I read a range of other documents, including governing body minutes, monitoring visit reports, school progress information and the leaders' new 'handbook'. I reviewed a selection of pupils' work with a group of pupils and with subject leaders. Together, we observed teaching

and learning in a range of different classrooms. I scrutinised the register of recruitment checks made on staff joining the school.

## **Main findings**

You and your team have responded to the findings of the last inspection with urgency, and with a determination that improvements are made for the benefit of the pupils in your school. New initiatives have been carefully researched and put in place thoroughly, in order to maximise their impact on pupils' outcomes. Your plans are rightly focused on the key actions needed to improve leadership, teaching and pupils' outcomes. Importantly, while you have been rigorous in your approach, you have taken care to ensure that your staff are supported throughout the process of change and that the positive ethos of the school is maintained. I saw this reflected very well when I visited the lively celebration assembly which was run by pupils and attended by parents and staff. In this assembly, pupils and staff warmly congratulated each other on the week's achievements, highlighting the friendly nature and community atmosphere of your school.

After the last inspection the chair of governors resigned and a new chair was appointed. A review of governance has led to a reduction in the number of governors and a reorganisation of their work. Governors have a much better understanding of the school, and of the progress that pupils make, than they have had in the past. They are starting to ask the right questions about the school. They have been very good at checking that the processes and new ways of working that you are implementing are being set up, and that staff are 'on board' with the changes being made. They know that they now need to focus more closely and regularly on checking the impact of your actions on pupils' outcomes, including for different groups.

You have restructured your senior leadership team, appointing a safeguarding lead with responsibility for pupils' welfare and ensuring that other senior leaders can focus their work on securing improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. You have improved and refined your monitoring systems of both the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes. This has meant that leaders are able to be more proactive about the support they provide for both teachers and pupils. For example, you know that pupils in Years 3 and 4 need to make rapid progress, and have reorganised teaching so that these pupils get the extra help they need to achieve well.

Much of leaders' work has, rightly, focused on securing improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in reading and writing, while also ensuring that the teaching of mathematics and across the wider curriculum remains strong. A substantial investment in staff training and associated quality resources is starting to make a difference to the quality of teaching in the school. Teachers confidently help pupils to improve their writing, providing opportunities for them to talk about and plan their writing so that the quality of work that pupils produce is much improved.

Similarly, the teaching of reading is improved. Better support for younger pupils, and for disadvantaged pupils as they learn to read, is starting to make a difference. Pupils reflected positively on the improvements they have seen. They proudly showed me their writing, explaining that they are now much more confident at writing at length. They also appreciate the introduction of 'class texts' (novels read together by the whole class), which are allowing pupils to discuss topics in depth and often provide a foundation for their writing.

A new tier of middle leadership underpins much of these improvements. You have provided leadership training for these new leaders. They are now starting to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and provide additional support to help teachers hone their skills more successfully. Your leaders of reading, writing and mathematics have had a key role in embedding the use of assessment and in setting up the school's new feedback policy. As a result, teachers now have a more accurate understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do. New roles to coordinate provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language and for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are also starting to have an impact. This includes making sure that teachers have a sharper understanding of the needs of different groups of pupils. Teachers are also using the new assessment information and their improved skills to plan learning which better reflects what pupils need to do to make faster progress. Pupils have noticed these improvements, saying that 'teachers never give up trying to help us'. They say that they especially value the information teachers provide which helps them to understand what to do to improve their work.

Much of last year was spent setting up the necessary changes, both to teaching and to leadership, including in training staff in new ways of working and in their new roles. Some of this has already had an impact on pupils' achievements; for example, last year at the end of key stage 2 pupils made better progress in mathematics than in the past. Additionally, a similar proportion of pupils to the national average achieved the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, demonstrating that they are well prepared for secondary school. Your biggest success was lower down the school, with a higher proportion of pupils than nationally reaching the expected standards in the phonics check. This is a direct result of your implementation of a more streamlined approach to teaching phonics, including providing carefully targeted extra help for some pupils.

In general, improvements to the teaching of reading and writing are relatively recent and have yet to fully have an impact on pupils' achievement across the school. You are, rightly, adapting provision to meet pupils' different needs. For example, you have reorganised provision for pupils in the Reception Year to meet the particular needs of this cohort. More teacher-led activities are helping to prepare these children for Year 1. Similarly, extra support for disadvantaged pupils, those new to speaking English and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is starting to make a positive difference to pupils' achievement. You are now in the position to check the impact of the changes you have made on pupils' progress, and are ready

to refine new ways of working, depending on what your findings tell you. For example, you already recognise that changes to the teaching of writing need to include making sure that the most able pupils write more fluently and imaginatively.

### **External support**

You have drawn on a range of external support to help you to make improvements to your school. The local authority school improvement officer regularly monitors your work and offers useful feedback. Hamwic Trust has undertaken the training of newly qualified teachers and middle leaders. Governors have been supported in their work through a review of their governance. A national lead of education conducted a useful review of your use of pupil premium funding. All of this support has helped you to set up the new ways of working which are now in place and starting to improve pupils' progress across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**