

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Daniel Lassetter
Executive Headteacher
St John's & St Peter's CE Academy
St Vincent Street West
Ladywood
Birmingham
B16 8RN

Dear Mr Lassetter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St John's & St Peter's CE Academy

Following my visit to your school on 14 February 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and members of the board of directors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that plans to support the school's development focus sharply on current priorities and accurately reflect the progress made towards these in order to help directors provide effective challenge and support to school leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you; the strategic head of school; other strategic leaders, including the strategic head of school improvement; English and mathematics subject leaders; other members of staff; representatives of the board of directors, including the chair; the external school improvement partner and

representative of the diocese. Discussions focused on the actions taken by leaders since the last inspection and their impact on pupils' achievements.

I evaluated the school's improvement plans and a range of other documents, including the school's self-evaluation statement, evidence of monitoring activities, minutes of governors' meetings and the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Together with members of the senior leadership team, I undertook short visits to all classrooms to observe pupils' learning. I spoke informally to some pupils about their learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes of staff. The school has been fully staffed since September 2017. The leadership team and board of directors have responsibility for, and work across, both schools within the multi-academy trust, sharing common approaches to teaching, learning and the curriculum. You have restructured the school so that teaching is organised in phase teams, which include teachers, higher-level teaching assistants and teaching assistants. You now employ two intervention teachers to provide individuals and small groups with additional support and challenge to help maximise pupils' progress.

Main findings

You have successfully addressed many of the long-standing issues faced by the school. The actions you, leaders, staff and directors have taken focus on the right areas to bring about sustainable improvements in pupils' attainment. You and your leadership team have brought about a positive shift in the culture of the school and you have the confidence of staff, directors and the diocese who all recognise the constructive developments and significant improvements that have taken place since the school joined All Saints Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

Evidence gathered during the brief visits I made to lessons indicates positive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils are keen to learn and take a pride in their work. The school has a purposeful atmosphere and a 'buzz for learning'. Actions are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes, although progress is not yet as rapid as you would like it to be. You are still overcoming gaps in pupils' knowledge because of previously poor teaching and low expectations. This is especially true for pupils in Years 5 and 6, particularly the boys.

Directors spoken to are clear about the school's strengths and the areas that require further improvement. All directors have received additional training to help them better understand the school's data and they use information from external sources, such as the Department for Education and the diocese, to confirm the information that you give them.

The school's self-evaluation and subsequent action plan focus on the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in May 2016. However, these plans were written in March 2017 and have not been revised since then. These plans do not present an accurate picture of pupils' current attainment or the school's current priorities and actions for development. While you have other documents to show progress, you are aware of the need to review this aspect of your work. More streamlined and targeted documentation would help directors to support and challenge school leaders more effectively.

Many of the systems and processes which were newly introduced at the time of the previous inspection are now embedded and making a positive difference to the quality of teaching and learning. For example, you have rigorous performance management processes in place to ensure that all staff are meeting your high expectations. Teaching approaches across the school strongly encourage pupils to participate. You have introduced simple but effective systems to help pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to take their learning forward.

Systems to check the amount of progress pupils make and the standards they are reaching are now well established and regularly followed. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding of individual pupils' needs. As a result, you carefully target additional support to address gaps in understanding and to maximise progress. Leaders also monitor outcomes for groups of pupils. For example, you can show that the most able pupils are now making better progress and more are on track to achieve the higher standards expected for their age. The accuracy of the system is checked when teachers within the MAT and from other schools meet to compare outcomes and standards.

Through your monitoring activities, you and the leadership team know that teachers' planning matches closely to pupils' abilities, including the most able. Regular training means that teachers and teaching assistants now have a clearer understanding of the higher expectations within the curriculum and set tasks that enable pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in a range of contexts.

Improving the quality of writing, especially for boys, is a key area for everyone. Pupils are making more progress than in the past but attainment in this subject remains lower than other areas. Leaders and teachers place a strong focus on ensuring that topics are engaging and capture the pupils' interests. When possible, links are made to other subjects, such as science or history. The use of questions to deepen pupils' thinking, alongside interesting texts, help to support pupils' writing. A focus on developing subject-specific vocabulary and encouraging pupils to answer in sentences also helps to promote effective learning.

Teachers plan mathematics lessons that build on pupils' prior learning, whatever their starting point. They ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. In the sample of

mathematics lessons seen, pupils were engaged in a wide variety of tasks. All lesson time was used effectively, including 'transition tasks', such as counting or rehearsing multiplication facts, when pupils moved from one activity to the next.

Since the last inspection, you have increased the level of engagement with parents and carers. For example, parents now have termly opportunities to attend workshops to find out more about what their children are learning. Parents, whose children have attended the school for a number of years, comment on how much the school has improved.

External support

The great majority of support for the school comes from within the MAT. Over time, many teachers and teaching assistants have had experience of working in both schools. This close and effective collaboration has been instrumental in bringing stability to the school, raising staff expectations and ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.

The school's improvement partner provides an external view of the progress the school is making and provides a source of support and challenge to you, school leaders and the board of directors. This input is valuable in helping to ensure that you are focusing on the correct priorities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of directors, 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

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector