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Mr Michael Stoppard
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Stoppard

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Harris Church of England Academy

Following my visit with Bernice Astling, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 13 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the senior leadership team, a group of subject leaders, the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust (MAT) and the school's improvement partner (SIP). Discussions focused on the actions taken by leaders since the last inspection and their impact on pupils' achievements.

We evaluated the trust's statement of action, the school's action plan and a range of other documents including the school's self-evaluation statement, records of continuing professional development, minutes of governors' meetings and the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Together with members of the senior leadership team, we undertook short visits to several classrooms to observe

pupils' learning. We spoke formally and informally to some pupils about their learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the teaching staff, including a number of new heads of department. The senior leadership team, which was newly formed at the time of the previous inspection, is now well established. The governing body has revised its meeting structures so that all governors have a greater awareness of the issues affecting the school and are able to respond to these more quickly.

The quality of leadership and management at the academy

Along with senior leaders and governors, you demonstrate a clear vision for the school and show a drive and determination to improve outcomes for all pupils. You have set ambitious targets and you have clear expectations about what is expected from both teachers and pupils. Evidence gathered shows that senior leaders take decisive action when the quality of teaching or pupils' behaviour do not meet these expectations.

Governors provide both challenge and support to the leadership team. They are generally knowledgeable about the progress that has been made since the last inspection and the areas that continue to require improvement. Governors seek to confirm the information shared with them by senior leaders through regular review days in school. While governors have access to a range of information, data in relation to pupils' progress and attainment is sometimes overly complicated and not focused on the impact of actions taken. You are aware of the need to review how progress is evaluated.

Middle leadership, specifically the role of heads of department, is developing. Middle leaders' knowledge of how well pupils are doing is improving. This is because they are better able to interpret school data and identify key issues and trends. They also have access to more accurate and robust assessment processes. For example, Year 11 mock examination papers were externally moderated to check the accuracy of assessments and to build teachers' confidence in making judgements. Middle leaders are now regularly involved in monitoring the work of their departments; however, many are not yet able to articulate the impact that their actions are having on the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress beyond a superficial level.

Developments to improve the quality of teaching across the school are having a positive impact. More teaching is meeting the needs of pupils, pupils understand what they are learning about and the use of effective questioning is developing. However, the quality of teaching remains too variable. Nevertheless, leaders at all levels are identifying issues more quickly than in the past and taking steps to

address them. Pupils' work is of an increasingly high standard and most pupils take a pride in their work. The majority of staff follow the school's assessment and marking policy. You have also adapted the key stage 4 curriculum to help meet pupils' needs more accurately.

Leaders' tracking information shows that pupils' behaviour is improving and fewer lessons are being disrupted by poor behaviour. However, where teaching is not well matched to pupils' needs there are still instances of pupils losing interest and learning time lost. School records indicate that the number of fixed-term exclusions and rate of use of the school's internal isolation room, although lower than last year, remain high. This is in part due to the school's increased expectations regarding pupils' behaviour.

In 2017, Year 11 pupils made overall progress in line with other pupils nationally from similar starting points. This is a marked improvement on outcomes from Year 11 in 2016. However, there was some lack of consistency across groups of pupils and subjects. The school's own information suggests that current cohorts are on track to improve their progress further.

The previous inspection recommended an external review of the use of pupil premium funding. You commissioned a review that has resulted in positive changes to the provision on offer. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has a high profile across the school, and leaders at all levels regularly check on the progress these pupils are making. Leaders are developing their approach to evaluating the impact of the extra funding for disadvantaged pupils. Overall, disadvantaged pupils' progress improved considerably in 2017. However, it remained significantly below that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.

To help the school's development, you have carefully sought support from a range of highly successful schools. This approach is proving effective, as you are able to target relevant support to specific aspects requiring improvement. The MAT is also providing effective support, partly by holding leaders and governors to account for the performance of the school but also through the provision of a SIP. The SIP is providing additional expertise to address the school's key priorities, specifically those linked to the reliability of assessments and the development of middle leaders.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose. Leaders have developed a series of termly action plans that meet requirements and they are assisting leaders in bringing about change. Leaders review the school's action plan regularly so that it remains up to date and reflects the school's developing priorities.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose. The trust's initial statement of action was deemed not fit for purpose in February 2017, because it did not identify how the school intended to address all the areas for improvement. The plan was subsequently amended to include all aspects.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector