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30 June 2021

Paula Burns  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Burns

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that staff are consistently implementing the approaches already introduced to improve the quality of teaching.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection in January 2019, there have been several changes in staffing. You have appointed a new permanent deputy headteacher and have seconded an additional deputy headteacher from another school until the end of the summer term 2021. You have restructured the leadership of subjects. After a period of significant instability, staffing is more stable.

The disruption to education caused by COVID-19 has slowed the pace of school improvement and reduced the impact of some of the school's actions. Leaders' capacity to develop subject leaders and monitor improvements has been hampered. However, since pupils returned in March 2021, you have significantly accelerated developments and progress.

## **Main findings**

Despite a difficult period, you have made sure that improvement has continued. This forward momentum slowed from September 2020 due to repeated year-group 'bubble' closures. However, since the school reopened to all pupils in March 2021, leaders have been able to act quickly to make up for lost time. Leaders are focusing closely on developing the quality of mathematics and how teachers deliver the curriculum to help pupils build on their knowledge and remember more of what they have been taught.

Since the last inspection, leaders have rewritten the curriculum in reading, writing and mathematics. The revised plans set out what pupils should know, and when, from Years 1 to 6. However, senior leaders identified that the current foundation subjects' curriculum plans do not fully meet the expectations of the national curriculum. They have quickly identified where the gaps are and are working to address these. You are implementing a new curriculum for the foundation subjects from September 2021.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. Pupils have a palpable love of reading. They talk with enthusiasm about the books they are reading together in class and how these have helped them learn more about other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 talked about how reading the story of Odysseus has helped them learn about Greek mythology. Phonics teaching happens every day. Leaders have invested heavily in a range of new reading materials, including phonetically decodable books which are matched to the sounds pupils are learning. Staff ensure pupils at risk of falling behind in their reading get the help they need.

Training for staff in mathematics has had a positive impact on the quality of mathematics teaching across the school. Teachers now ensure that reasoning and problem-solving are part of day-to-day lessons. This means pupils have regular opportunities to apply the mathematics skills they learn. Pupils' work shows that they are now being suitably challenged. Pupils with special educational needs

and/or disabilities are well supported as work is adapted to make it accessible. The work in pupils' books is well presented and accurate. Pupils take pride in their work.

The teaching of writing has improved. Leaders have ensured that the teaching of writing is based on high-quality texts. There is a clear sequence to learning, where pupils look at a text, consider the features and then practise using these features in their own writing. Pupils now have a strong understanding of the key features of different text types. They are given opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum. However, pupils' work shows that the new approaches are not yet consistent across the school. There is still work to do to ensure that all teachers promote pupils' writing successfully.

Governors are skilled in challenging leaders. They know in detail which areas the school is working on to improve. Throughout the pandemic they have continued to carry out some of their usual monitoring activities. Since March 2021, they have begun to return to on-site monitoring activities.

The school's development plan includes the priorities that will enable the school to move forward. However, some aspects of the development plan are too general. This could make it difficult to hold leaders to account for the improvement actions. This format was provided by Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust. Both school leaders and leaders from the multi-academy trust explained how they plan to move to a new format that will reflect the school's current plans more closely.

### **Additional support**

Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust continues to provide useful support to the school. This has had a positive impact on the quality of senior leadership, reading, writing and mathematics development.

COVID-19 restrictions have hampered some external support from national leaders of education, as meetings were cancelled. However, the multi-academy trust is working closely with subject leaders to refine and strengthen curriculum leadership.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, and the leaders for mathematics, phonics and English. I met the chair of the local academy board. I also spoke with the chief executive officer and the chief school effectiveness officer from Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited phonics lessons, looked at pupils' books and listened to pupils read to an adult. I examined the school's single central register of pre-employment checks. I reviewed the school's improvement plan and minutes of governors' meetings. I met

with a group of six pupils. I considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 12 free text responses, as well as 17 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust, 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 reports website.

Yours sincerely

Eve Morris  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**