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15 February 2013

Ms Darra McFadyen  
Principal  
Trinity Primary Academy  
Bounds Green Road  
London  
N22 8ES

Dear Ms McFadyen

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Trinity Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Judith Rundle, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 13 and 14 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, members of staff, parents and carers and pupils. They also met with the Chair of the Governing Body who is a representative of the academy's sponsor, the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET).

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is not making enough progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

Trinity Primary Academy opened in September 2012 following the closure of its predecessor school, Nightingale Primary School, which was given a notice to improve when it was inspected in October 2011. The predecessor school was monitored in May 2012 and judged to be making satisfactory progress.

The academy is sponsored by the AET. Staff from the predecessor school transferred to the academy, although seven teachers left at the end of the previous school year. A number of teachers also left the academy at the end of the autumn term 2012 and four new teachers joined in January 2013. The academy has found it very difficult to recruit teachers and two teaching posts are currently being covered by temporary staff. The interim Principal was also the headteacher of the predecessor school. A substantive Principal has been appointed for September 2013. A governing body has now been formed and met for the first time just before the inspection.

Trinity Primary Academy is larger than most primary schools. Almost half of all pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium, which is additional funding the government provides to support these pupils because they are at particular risk of underachieving. Most pupils are from minority ethnic groups and many speak English as an additional language. Many pupils have special educational needs, although the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. A relatively large number of pupils join or leave the academy during the year.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Pupils generally join the academy with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below expectations for their age. The progress that they make is insecure across year groups, classes and subjects because the quality of teaching is too variable. As a result, in most year groups pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly below average; this is particularly the case in writing.

Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make similar progress to other pupils. Their attainment is typically slightly lower than other pupils', but the difference is smaller than in most schools. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language generally make similar progress to others, although their progress in lessons is sometimes limited when they are not well supported by teachers or teaching assistants.

Teachers generally assess pupils' attainment accurately, although the levels that they report for pupils are occasionally slightly generous. This is mainly because they rely heavily on tests and major assessments, and take too little account of pupils' attainment over time. This is something that leaders recognise and are tackling.

Some useful work is being done to improve pupils' reading skills. The quality of phonics sessions, where pupils are helped to learn the links between sounds and letters, has improved. In some classes these sessions are now very good, although some staff do not model the sounds to pupils with sufficient clarity and precision. Some good work is also being done to improve pupils' writing skills, although some pupils have too few opportunities to write at length. Pupils' progress in mathematics is often limited because they have to work through too many easy or repetitive

questions, and they have few opportunities to tackle more extended problems or questions that set mathematics in a real-life context.

### **The quality of teaching**

Too much teaching is inadequate or requires improvement. As a result, pupils are not making enough academic progress.

Some teaching is good, and lessons across the academy have a number of strengths. Lessons are calm and orderly, and teachers have very good relationships with their classes. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills when they work with their 'talk partners'. They also have frequent opportunities to work collaboratively in groups. These opportunities are generally well planned and enable pupils to develop good social skills.

Teachers' marking has improved. There is some excellent practice in a few classes. Here, teachers make concise and very precise comments, pupils automatically check and respond to these and teachers follow up rigorously to ensure that pupils act on their advice. In other classes teachers mark regularly, often meticulously and at length. However, the potential value of this marking is sometimes lost because teachers' comments do not clearly identify the key next steps for improvement or pupils do not (or cannot) read their teacher's comments and teachers do not follow up to ensure that pupils act on their advice.

Less effective lessons are typically not planned carefully enough. In some cases activities are not well chosen and do not enable pupils to make enough progress. In others the lesson is not pitched at the right level for everyone: work is too easy for brighter pupils or too hard for others in the class. Teachers sometimes fail to recognise when pupils are struggling to make progress, so simply carry on with their planned activities, rather than amending their approach. The support provided by teaching assistants is variable in quality. Some is good, but some teaching assistants do not have the skills necessary to provide focused and targeted support for individual pupils.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the academy. They are polite and friendly to staff and visitors. Some older pupils act as playground buddies. They help other pupils to play safely and feel secure. Pupils are confident that staff will deal effectively with occasional minor bullying, such as teasing.

Pupils have responded positively to the new system for managing classroom behaviour. The new reward system motivates and helps them to behave well. Individual pupils with particularly challenging behaviour are supported intensively; staff help them to learn how to manage their own behaviour so that they do not get into trouble. Pupils are now rarely excluded from school.

Pupils' attendance is improving, although it is still below average. Staff target pupils whose attendance falls below 85% and work closely with their parents and carers to support improvement.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

Many things have improved in the past six months; this is something that pupils and parents and carers recognise and appreciate. The interim Principal has provided much-needed stability during the transition to academy status. She and the academy's other leaders have high expectations and a realistic understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. A useful plan is in place to guide developments. However, there have been many changes in staffing and the academy has found it difficult to recruit new teachers. This has stretched the academy's capacity and leaders have found it difficult to make the necessary improvements to teaching during this period of turbulence.

Senior leaders monitor and check the academy's work appropriately, for example by visiting lessons and checking teachers' planning. A comprehensive plan is in place to identify when particular monitoring activities will take place. Staff recognise that they are now being held to account more for pupils' achievement. A good system is in place to collect and analyse information about pupils' academic progress. This provides a better picture of pupils' current attainment and their progress since joining the academy. It helps staff to recognise when pupils need additional help and support.

Leaders observe lessons and provide teachers with feedback to help them to improve. The forms used to record these observations provide useful summaries, but do not always identify the key things that individual teachers need to do next to improve. Leaders also work with teachers to produce periodic assessments of their strengths and weaknesses. These are very detailed and, again, there is a danger that the key, immediate priorities for the teacher are lost.

The AET has worked hard to form a local governing body, but has found it difficult. A governing body has now been formed, with some staff and parent governors working alongside representatives from the AET. It has just met for the first time, so it is not possible to comment on its impact or effectiveness.

### **External support**

The academy is not receiving adequate support. There has been some useful assistance, for example from two National Leaders in Education, who also supported the predecessor school. They provide valuable advice and help leaders to monitor the academy's work, but their time is limited. A mathematics consultant from the AET also provides useful support. However, given the acute turbulence in staffing, the support provided by the AET has not been sufficiently intensive. As a result,

teachers are not receiving enough advice, guidance and training to help them improve their practice.

AET staff visit the academy regularly to discuss progress. However, they are too reliant on the results of monitoring carried out by the academy's leaders and the National Leaders in Education; they do not check things sufficiently for themselves. The reports that follow these visits do not help leaders to identify precisely the key things that they need to do next.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and increase the amount of good teaching by ensuring that:
  - teachers select lesson activities carefully to ensure that they help pupils to make rapid progress
  - work in lessons is pitched correctly for everyone and challenges brighter pupils fully
  - teachers regularly check how much progress pupils are making during the lesson, amending their teaching as necessary
  - pupils respond to the comments that teachers make when they mark their work
  - pupils have more opportunities to write at length
  - pupils have more opportunities to use their mathematical skills to answer extended problems and questions that involve real-life contexts.
- Improve the quality and intensity of support and challenge for the academy, in particular by ensuring that the AET and the new governing body:
  - monitor and check the academy's progress more carefully
  - help the academy's leaders to identify the most important short-term actions
  - provide intensive support to the academy to help teachers to develop their classroom practice.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**