

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9153
Direct email: naik.sandhu@serco.com



21 October 2013

Wendy Garrard
Principal
St Mary's Church of England Academy
Trinity Avenue
Mildenhall
Suffolk
IP28 7LR

Dear Mrs Garrard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 18 October 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2013. 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. The academy should take further action to:

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to respond to the new and effective approach to teachers' marking.
- Ensure that governors and trustee directors keep a watchful eye on the progress of all groups of pupils but in particular the achievement of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding and the most-able learners.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy principal, and three governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I contacted, by phone, the external consultant who supports the academy. The improvement plan

was evaluated and I checked your most recent information about pupils' learning. We made short visits to all classes and I looked at a sample of pupils' written work.

Context

Since the previous inspection one teacher has left the school and two have joined the teaching team. The internal promotion of a phase leader to the role of assistant headteacher has extended the leadership team. Seven new teaching assistants joined the academy in September.

Main findings

You are addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection positively and with true grit. Senior leaders and governors know what needs to be achieved and, importantly, how to do it. The development plan explains clearly how actions taken will lead to improvements in learning. Everyone knows what their role is in achieving the targets. Your systems for checking the quality of learning and teaching are rigorous and provide clear guidance on what staff must work on. Follow-up is timely to check that improvement follows. Marking of pupils' written work is improving, although the quality of pupils' responses is more variable. Staff are responsive to your encouragement to develop their professional expertise and skills within and beyond the academy.

While rising to the challenge of raising pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 you have wisely ensured that above average standards are retained in Reception and Key Stage 1. Exemplary provision in Reception ensures that children make rapid progress. Records of their learning are of high quality. Challenging targets for all pupils' progress have been set. You have positioned staff cleverly to promote opportunities for peer coaching and the sharing of good practice.

Governors are well placed to contribute to the academy's improving performance. They bring a wide range of skills to the table that the academy uses advantageously in monitoring its work. A strong partnership exists between staff, governors and trustee directors. Leaders are challenged and held accountable as well as supported. The intensity of visits from governors has increased. They asked for easily accessible data and they have it. It will be important for them to keep a watchful eye on all groups of pupils' achievement - particularly those in receipt of pupil premium funding and the most-able learners.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The academy ensures that it retains an external view of its performance through regular visits from a consultant. This has been particularly useful in developing the

leadership team's capacity; ensuring data are accurate and setting challenging targets for pupils' achievement. You have already used suggestions from Ofsted's 'Getting to Good' seminar to enhance the academy's improvement work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Trustee Directors, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, and the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector