

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
MAT@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 April 2019

Mr Andrew Teale
Chief Executive Officer
Bishop Anthony Education Trust
Unit 11, The Business Quarter
Ludlow Eco Park
Sheet Road
Ludlow, Shropshire
SY8 1FD

Dear Mr Teale

Summary evaluation of Bishop Anthony Educational Trust

Following the summary evaluation of Bishop Anthony Education Trust (BAET) in March 2019, when I was accompanied by Catherine Crooks, Her Majesty's Inspector, I am writing on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings.

Thank you for your cooperation during our visit to the trust for stage two of the summary evaluation, which took place on 4–8 March 2019. Please pass on our sincere thanks to your staff and other stakeholders who kindly gave up their time to meet us.

The findings from the summary evaluation and a wider consideration of the trust's overall performance are set out below.

Summary of main findings

- BAET has not been successful enough in improving the quality of education for pupils in schools where there are significant weaknesses. This is unacceptable. At the most recent inspections, three of the trust's schools were judged to require special measures and one was judged to require improvement.
- Trust senior leaders and directors have not had a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the trust. Systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the trust's work and the implementation of their strategic plans for improvement have lacked rigour. The newly appointed interim chief executive

officer (CEO) has an accurate view of the extensive improvements required and has begun to improve communication between the trust and school leaders. Headteachers are pleased with the changes instigated by the interim CEO.

- Most headteachers and members of local governing bodies (LGB) accurately identify that the impact of the trust has been limited. Many are rightly frustrated with the quality of trust leadership and poor communication between BAET and its schools.
- The trust's vision and values have generally been communicated well when schools first join the trust. However, the trust's ethos has not then been embedded.
- BAET has not ensured a trust-wide focus on improving outcomes for pupils, with leaders having an insufficient understanding of how well pupils are achieving. No effective action has been taken to understand or address the performance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Trust senior leaders are not sufficiently held to account. Lines of accountability and the use of the scheme of delegation are confusing. While members and directors have been committed to governance, they have not carried out their functions effectively.
- Since the inspections earlier this year, governance has been strengthened. Two new members with appropriate seniority and experience have been appointed from the diocese.
- A lack of a coherent strategy to improve the quality of education for pupils has meant that some schools have not been challenged and supported to improve. The trust does not have sufficient oversight of the work of academy improvement partners (AIPs).
- While the overall impact of the trust has not been effective enough, two schools have improved from their predecessor school inspection judgement.
- Schools that were judged to require special measures earlier this year have received appropriate support since their inspections. While it is too early to determine the impact of this work, early actions are relevant and demonstrate urgency.
- A significant proportion of headteachers and governors expressed valid frustration at the quality of the trust's support for finance, human resources and estate functions. Sometimes key changes are not communicated effectively.
- Safeguarding was found to be effective in seven out of the eight schools inspected earlier this year. Headteachers and local governing bodies take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. The trust carries out checks to

monitor how well schools are fulfilling their statutory safeguarding duties. However, directors and trust senior leaders do not have sufficient oversight of safeguarding in the trust schools because the checks they carry out are not systematically or strategically planned.

- There has been no specific strategy in place regarding recruitment and retention of staff. However, the trust has successfully used executive headteachers to secure leadership capacity across its small rural schools. As yet, trust leaders do not have a mechanism for identifying and sharing best practice in the quality of teaching and leadership.
- The trust does not have a coherent professional development strategy to develop teachers' classroom practice. There have been limited training or networking opportunities in relation to teaching and learning, leadership or curriculum.

Range of evidence

For stage one of this summary evaluation, inspections of eight schools within the trust took place between 7 November 2018 and 18 December 2018. All these inspections were carried out under either section 5 or 8 of the Education Act 2005 (the Act), as amended.

The inspection outcomes at stage one of the summary evaluation were as follows:

- The section 5 inspections of the Hereford Academy and St Thomas Cantilupe CE Academy resulted in both schools being judged inadequate and requiring special measures. This demonstrated a decline from their previous Ofsted judgements under BAET. Ludlow Infant and Nursery School was judged inadequate and requiring special measures from a predecessor school judgement of good.
- In other section 5 inspections, Burford CE Primary School was judged to require improvement from its predecessor school judgement of outstanding. Ludlow Junior School was judged good from its predecessor school judgement of requires improvement.
- In the section 8 short inspections of Burley Gate CE Primary School, St Michaels CE Primary School, Tenbury CE Primary School, inspectors judged that the schools continue to be good.

During stage two of the summary evaluation, HMI visited seven schools, meeting with the headteacher, representatives of the LGB and a small group of leaders and staff. Telephone discussions were held with the headteachers of other schools. Inspectors met with the CEO and other senior and operational staff from the trust over the course of the week. Inspectors also met with two national leaders of education (NLEs) and one of the AIPs, who provide support to the trust. In addition,

I met with a group of directors, including the chair and a group of members, with representation from the Diocese of Hereford. Inspectors scrutinised a range of relevant documentation.

Context

The Bishop Anthony Education Trust has 16 schools spread across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire. It is a Diocese of Hereford multi-academy trust. The trust consists of 14 primary schools, including an infant and a junior school, and two secondary schools. 12 of the schools are academy converters and four are sponsored academies. One school, The Hereford Academy, was re-brokered from a standalone trust. Of the 16 schools, 13 are Diocese of Hereford schools.

BAET was created by the Diocese of Hereford in 2013 with the first school, St Thomas Cantilupe CE Academy, joining in January 2014. Two more schools joined in 2014, one in 2015, five in 2016, four in 2017 and three in 2018. The most recent school to join the trust was Eastnor Parochial Primary School in November 2018.

The primary schools range in size from around 40 pupils at Morville CE Primary School to around 260 pupils at Ludlow Infant and Nursery School. The trust has applied to the Department for Education for Ludlow Infant and Nursery School and Ludlow Junior School (240 pupils) to merge in September 2019 and become Ludlow Primary School.

The interim CEO started in post at the end of January 2019. The trust senior leaders are the CEO and the chief operating officer (COO). The management of central services is provided by a relatively small central team that includes the academy effectiveness officer (AEO) and officers for finance, governance and compliance. The trust manages some of its human resources and estates functions internally, but also receives advice and support through external specialist providers. The trust commissions AIPs to carry out school improvement work across the schools.

The interim CEO carries out a dual role as the director of education for the diocese and interim CEO for BAET. The diocesan board of education (DBE) can remove and appoint members. In January 2019, two new members were appointed. The trust sees members as a backstop to ensure that governance of the trust is working effectively. The trust has a board of directors who are responsible for the strategic direction of the trust. LGBs' delegated powers vary and are outlined in the scheme of delegation.

Eleven out of 16 schools in the trust were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspections. The trust has sponsored three schools. One was previously judged inadequate and is yet to be inspected. One was previously judged inadequate and initially improved to be judged requires improvement before declining again to inadequate. The final sponsored school was previously judged good and has since declined to be judged requires improvement and, in the most recent inspection, inadequate. Of the other schools inspected since joining the trust, five have

remained good; two have improved from a previous judgement of requires improvement and are now good; one has declined from good to inadequate; and one has declined from outstanding to requires improvement.

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the trust is broadly in line with the national figure. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who have an education, health and care plan (EHC) in the trust is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils across the trust who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.

Summary of main findings

- Trust-wide trends are not necessarily reflective of all individual schools because some of the primary schools have small numbers of pupils. The secondary school performance data includes just two schools and the weaker data from Hereford Academy impacts negatively on the trust's overall average.
- Test results published over the last two years show that the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development was just above the national average.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above the national average in 2018. At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and greater depth standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average for the last two years.
- At key stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was similar to the national average in 2018. The proportion attaining the higher standard in reading was also similar to the national average. The proportion attaining the higher standard in mathematics was just below the national average. However, just 38% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018.
- Across the trust, the progress pupils make by the end of key stage 2 is broadly average.
- By the end of secondary school, pupils achieved below national figures for each of the government's headline measures. While pupils at Ludlow Church of England School did better than those at The Hereford Academy, this was still not better than pupils nationally. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the trust was even more of a concern; these pupils did less well even than similar pupils nationally.
- BAET was set up with good moral intentions and a clear purpose of meeting an educational need in the community. However, this has failed. Initially, the

trust made a conscious decision to support several schools in challenging circumstances. Between 2016 and 2018, there was a rapid expansion, with 10 new schools joining the trust. As the trust has grown, it has not had the strategy or systems to support its schools effectively.

- The trust has not had a successful impact on helping pupils to achieve better, particularly in schools with significant weaknesses. Where there is improvement, it is often due to good leadership from headteachers and LGBs, rather than the contribution and effectiveness of the trust.
- Most headteachers and LGBs talk positively about their experience when first joining the trust. Typically, the values and aims of the trust were communicated well and schools were given a clear message about retaining their autonomy. However, too many key stakeholders are frustrated at the lack of effective support and communication. They are sometimes given confusing messages about what they can and cannot do. They do not feel well informed about changes in the trust at a director and trust senior leader level. The trust's values, aims and ethos have not translated into schools' experience of the trust over time.
- Directors and senior trust leaders do not have effective systems for evaluating the overall strengths and weaknesses of the trust. They do not respond in an agile enough manner to schools that are in decline. They were unaware of the extent of weaknesses that were reported in some of the schools that were inspected during stage one.
- The trust's 2016–2019 strategic plan has not been effective. There is little evidence that the plan has led to improvement. In several places, the plan does not stipulate timescales for actions or how priorities will be measured for impact. Some of the messages in the plan regarding governance and school improvement do not reflect what happens in practice, or what is stipulated in the scheme of delegation.
- The interim CEO has a good understanding of the weaknesses in the trust. He has identified appropriate priorities and has already started to put in place new systems to improve communication. A new headteachers' board is enabling school leaders to have their voice heard. Historically, the meetings arranged for headteachers and LGB chairs have brought about frustration. A significant number of headteachers and chairs felt that decisions were often 'top down' and there was little opportunity for discussion in the meetings.
- Directors and trust senior leaders are not aware of trends in pupil outcomes. Board meetings and the education committee meetings have not focused on the overall performance of the trust. Sometimes individual school performance data is discussed, but not in appropriate depth. There are clear, trust-wide strengths and weaknesses that need further exploration by the trust. For example, disadvantaged pupils do not perform well compared to their peers in

national assessments, particularly at key stages 2 and 4. Little effective action has been taken by the trust to either discuss or address this issue.

- Trust senior leaders have not ensured that there is a clear and coherent strategy to improve pupils' quality of education. Too much of the school improvement work happens in isolation and the impact of the support is not well understood by trust senior leaders and directors. The trust commissions AIPs to provide support and challenge to schools. In many cases, headteachers value their input and support. Sometimes, visit notes lack precise next steps and follow-up support. Trust senior leaders have not carried out quality assurance of the AIPs or given them enough direction.
- There has been a lack of school improvement expertise and support for the Hereford Academy. The trust put in place an executive headteacher to work across the two trust secondary schools. This was seen by the trust as the main school improvement strategy, and little additional support was provided. This support has not been sufficient considering the extent of its weaknesses.
- The trust's approach to improving schools has not been successful in halting the decline of four schools, as indicated by the inspection judgements earlier this year. However, two BAET schools have improved from the predecessor school judgements. This is indicative of the lack of consistent impact of the trust.
- Schools that were judged to require special measures in stage one have received appropriate support from the trust since their inspections. The interim CEO and the AEO have put in place positive early actions, although it is too early to demonstrate the impact of this work. For example, they recognised that a full-time headteacher is required at the Hereford Academy and have appointed one to start in summer term. Two NLEs have started to support two of the schools and the post-Ofsted written statements of action demonstrate appropriate rigour.
- The interim CEO, members and directors are taking the weaknesses in the trust seriously. They are working closely with the regional schools commissioner to consider the structures and processes that are required to make the trust more successful in the future. One of the early decisions taken has already brought about more effective oversight of governance. The diocese has approved two new members who have seniority in the diocese and appropriate experience. They are skilled, knowledgeable and clear about the need to hold directors to account more robustly.
- Over time, directors have been committed to the trust and have had good intentions. However, they have not carried out their functions effectively. Board meetings have not had enough focus on the educational effectiveness of the trust and directors do not provide enough challenge in education

committee meetings. Trust senior leaders have not been held to account for the impact of their work.

- Lines of accountability between directors and local governing bodies are not clear. In a significant number of schools, local governing body members are frustrated with mixed messages regarding their roles. For example, sometimes local governors are encouraged to offer solutions to situations affecting their schools, but these are then rejected by the trust. On occasion, the trust does not adhere to the scheme of delegation, which adds further confusion to roles and responsibilities.
- There are strengths in local governing bodies. Inspectors met with a range of governors during stage two of this evaluation. Many are knowledgeable, skilled and committed to their communities. In several cases, these strengths reflect the legacy of governing bodies from predecessor schools. Some local governors have a better understanding of some of their statutory responsibilities following training arranged by the trust.
- The trust's central team is relatively small, reflecting overall income levels. Some directors feel that a great deal of their time has been taken up managing a climate in which there are financial challenges.
- Most headteachers and local governing bodies are frustrated with inconsistencies in the quality of support for finance, human resources and estates. Some report that finance questions are not answered, or not answered quickly enough, and that there has been a lack of high-quality support for budgeting. Some headteachers report that their support for finance has been more positive. In several cases, the trust has frustrated schools' own strategic plans. For example, some schools have been waiting for over a year for the trust to arrange the tender for a school meals provider. Aspects of professionalism need improvement.
- Headteachers and LGBs were not given sufficiently clear information about changes in financial autonomy. They feel that recent trust decisions around budget management in light of an unforeseen and unavoidable building issue at one school were not communicated effectively or followed up well by the trust. The trust has successfully secured some external funding to address the building issue. Despite this, trust senior leaders still forecast financial strain on the trust by 2021/22.
- Directors and trust senior leaders have not ensured clear lines of accountability for the central staff team. The line management structure is not as clear as it should be. Some staff do not know who they report to. The support and guidance for central staff have not been strong over time.

- The trust has put in place central training for governance, finance and safeguarding. While this training has not helped to clarify roles and responsibilities, some schools report that aspects of it have been useful.
- There has been little strategic thinking about how the trust can become self-sustaining and self-improving. Few opportunities have been put in place for central training in relation to teaching and learning, leadership or the curriculum. The trust has not systematically identified or shared good practice in leadership or teaching. That said, executive headteachers have been used well by the trust to provide capacity across several small rural schools.
- The interim CEO is aware that more needs to be done to recruit and retain staff across the trust. Some school staff report that they do not feel closely connected to the trust. The trust is yet to fully consider how it might engage with initial teacher training.

Safeguarding

- During the inspections earlier this year, inspectors confirmed that safeguarding arrangements were effective in seven out of eight of the trust's schools. In the school where safeguarding was judged ineffective, the trust has taken appropriate action to respond to weaknesses identified in the report.
- Headteachers and LGBs take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Some schools reported to inspectors during this summary evaluation that the safeguarding training facilitated by the trust has been useful. The trust has arranged central courses for designated safeguarding leads and for safer recruitment.
- The trust has taken some measures to monitor how well schools fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Some AIPs check safeguarding on their visits and schools send in the number of safeguarding incidents to the trust each term. However, this work is not carried out strategically and systematically by the trust. Directors and senior trust leaders cannot assure themselves that schools are carrying out their responsibilities effectively.
- The scheme of delegation does not fully or clearly outline the roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. For example, the trust's planned procedures for the development of schools' safeguarding policies are not reflective of what happens in practice.

Recommendations

Directors and trust senior leaders should improve the quality of education for children and pupils across the trust by:

- establishing a robust system for evaluating the trust's overall effectiveness and a clear strategic plan to harness strengths and address weaknesses

- ensuring that the trust's values, vision and strategic priorities are communicated well to trust schools
- developing a coherent school improvement strategy so that all schools receive timely and effective support, particularly those schools with significant weaknesses
- establishing clearly understood lines of accountability within the arrangements for governance, so that governance at all levels provides sufficient challenge and support
- improving accountability of trust senior leaders through sufficient oversight of the quality of governance
- understanding how well pupils are achieving across the trust and using that insight to improve pupil outcomes, particularly in key stage 1, key stage 4 and for disadvantaged pupils
- considering the effectiveness and capacity of the trust central staff structure and ensuring that central staff receive the support to carry out their roles effectively
- putting in place a well-planned and coherent strategy for trust-wide professional development, particularly in relation to leadership, teaching and learning and the curriculum
- ensuring that schools receive consistently good-quality and timely support for finance, human resources and estates
- building on the work that has started to improve communication with schools, so all stakeholders feel respected, included and supported
- establishing more effective oversight of how well schools are carrying out their safeguarding responsibilities.

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex: Academies that are part of the trust

URN	School name	Date joined trust	Ofsted phase	Most recent inspection date	
				Inspection date	OE grade
143974	Eastnor Parochial Primary School	01/11/2018	Primary	16/11/2012	1
143454	Burley Gate CofE Primary School	01/10/2016	Primary	04/12/2018	2
141180	Morville CofE (Controlled) Primary School	01/09/2014	Primary	21/06/2017	2
145673	St George's CofE Academy, Clun	01/05/2018	Primary	07/07/2011	2
143455	St Michael's CofE Primary School	01/10/2016	Primary	17/12/2018	2
145672	Bishops Castle Primary School	01/04/2018	Primary	11/12/2013	2
142142	Bitterley CofE Primary School (Aided)	01/07/2015	Primary	25/04/2012	2
142448	Tenbury CofE Primary School	01/02/2016	Primary	27/11/2018	2
145275	Conover CofE Primary School	01/12/2017	Primary	22/11/2012	2
143801	Ludlow Junior School	01/12/2016	Primary	15/11/2018	2
144201	Burford CofE Primary School	01/04/2017	Primary	08/11/2018	3
143800	Ludlow Infant and Nursery School Academy	01/12/2016	Primary	22/11/2018	4
140183	St Thomas Cantilupe CofE Academy	01/01/2014	Primary	11/12/2018	4
145300	St Edward's CofE Primary School	01/12/2017	Primary	03/03/2017	4
144435	Ludlow Church of England School	01/04/2017	Secondary	30/09/2015	2
135662	The Hereford Academy	01/11/2014	Secondary	21/11/2018	4