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Mrs Caroline Preece
Principal
St Anne's Church of England Academy
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Dear Mrs Preece

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

Following my visit to your academy on 3 April 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the academy has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and the governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the academy to become good.

The academy should take further action to:

- ensure that the curriculum gives pupils the knowledge that they need to be successful, regardless of their starting points.
- increase the focus and rigour with which leaders and governors are improving the quality of sixth-form provision.
- refine the action plan so that it includes regular, measurable targets against which leaders, including governors, can monitor the impact of actions and the quality of external support.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the principal, other senior and middle leaders, pupils and students, members of the governing body, and a representative of the Diocese of Manchester to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook short visits to lessons, accompanied by the vice-principal and looked at work in pupils' books. A range of documentation was considered, including: the academy's action plan and self-evaluation; minutes of governing body meetings; reports of the school improvement partner and specialist leaders of education to the academy. I also reviewed the single central record.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes to the governing body. Two new course directors have been appointed in English and humanities, respectively. There have also been some changes to the responsibilities of the leadership team. A number of teachers have also left and joined the school during this period.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, leaders' actions have not been quick enough in bringing about the necessary improvements. Outcomes for pupils in key subjects have remained very poor and therefore the pace of improvements has needed to be rapid. Instabilities in staffing have slowed the progress the academy was able to make. However, leaders have not helped by convincing themselves that an overall improvement in the headline figure could mask significant weaknesses.

Governors recognise that the quality of education for pupils who are capable of achieving the top grades has not been a priority. This is despite a stubborn trend of very poor progress for these pupils over a number of years across many subject areas. In some subjects, these pupils have achieved more than two grades lower than their peers nationally. The academy's action plan does not pay enough attention to what actions need to be put in place to remedy this weakness. There was little evidence seen of the suitability of the curriculum for these pupils in other year groups.

The previous inspection asked leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all teaching is consistently good by planning for the progress of all pupils from all their different starting points. A number of specialist leaders of education (SLEs) have been working with departments and leaders. The scale of the work that needs to be done is evident by how many recommendations and next steps have been made. There is evidence of some emerging successes, and these have been further aided by the new course directors.

Many of leaders' actions are focused on teaching and learning styles and, while this

has ensured that there is consistency in terms of effective use of time, it has missed what is fundamentally wrong. Pupils are not being given the knowledge that they need to be successful. Teachers have covered topics but have not ensured that new knowledge builds on what pupils already know. The work in pupils' books and the outcomes for pupils demonstrate that pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge. Leaders have begun to think about how they plan for pupils to make progress through their study of their curriculum, for example in English, but this is at an early stage.

Leaders were also asked to improve outcomes for students in the sixth form by improving the progress of most-able learners following academic courses. The sixth form is very small and offers few academic subjects. There have been some improvements, but the number of students makes any meaningful comparison difficult.

The proportion of pupils completing their programmes of study and staying on at the sixth form was another area for improvement. Improvements have been negligible. Not only are retention rates below the national average but the proportion of pupils not engaged in education, employment and training is too high. Leaders have not taken enough action to make the necessary improvements.

The academy action plan covers most of the areas for improvement but is glaring in its lack of focused actions to improve the quality of education in the sixth form. The action plan is vague in who is being held to account for actions, what the impact of actions are and how this will be evidenced. It is not clear from the action plan as to how leaders and governors monitor the impact of their actions and the quality of external support.

External support

The academy is accessing significant support from several local schools and teaching alliances. The support is being provided by specialist leaders of education across a range of subjects. The academy has also appointed a new school improvement partner to aid leaders in making the necessary improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Manchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector