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14 November 2023

Katie Smith  
Principal  
St Edward's Church of England Academy  
Westwood Road  
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Staffordshire  
ST13 8DN

Dear Mrs Smith

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection of St Edward's Church of England Academy**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 18 October 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders and trustees the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, scrutinised documents, met with groups of staff (including subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and pastoral staff) and a group of pupils and talked to pupils informally throughout the day. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.**

## **Main findings**

There have been significant changes in the leadership of the school since the previous inspection. This includes your appointment as principal. Additional capacity has also been added to the leadership team by the inclusion of a new vice-principal with responsibility for the school's quality of education and a new special educational needs coordinator, who is overseeing the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since your appointment, you have restructured your leadership team to refocus its work on the most pressing priorities. At the time of the inspection, the school was fully staffed.

You are taking effective action to improve the quality of education at the school. You have been well supported by your leadership team to identify the most important steps to success. You are approaching these in the right order and have tackled these with enthusiasm. You have worked carefully to redesign the school's curriculum. Leaders have made sure that curriculum planning specifies the precise knowledge pupils need to learn. You have also made sure that the things pupils are taught build successfully on the things they have already encountered. Leaders have made sound use of subject-specific research to shape this work. Together, these measures are supporting teachers to design lessons that closely align with the intended curriculum. You have also ensured that each subject's curriculum matches the aims of the national curriculum. The changes you have made to the structure of the curriculum allow for adequate time for each subject to be covered in full.

The school has made smart changes to the way in which pupils with SEND are identified and their needs understood when they first join the school. You are working closely with external agencies and local feeder schools to better understand pupils' needs before they arrive at the school. You have made sure that staff receive a wealth of useful information about pupils' individual needs. Leaders check carefully to make sure that staff make good use of this information to support these pupils. Increasingly, teachers now think carefully about pupils' individual needs, and most use well the information they have about pupils to adapt their teaching to meet these needs. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on the experiences of pupils with SEND.

You have also made significant changes to the support for pupils who are at an early stage of reading. Well-trained staff check carefully on pupils' reading when they join the school. Consequently, gaps in pupils' reading ability are spotted quickly. Tailored interventions are in place to support pupils who need it. This work is beginning to have a positive impact.

You have carried out some valuable work to improve aspects of assessment that you have identified through your own monitoring. Leaders' actions in this area are beginning to have a positive impact on teachers' use of assessment across the school. However, there is still variability in the use of assessment. The tools that teachers use to check on pupils' progress through the curriculum do not always help them to identify if pupils have understood the things they have been taught. Because of this, on occasion, teachers are

not able to take swift action to close gaps in pupils' learning. Where this happens, this hinders learning.

You and your leadership team are passionate and driven to improve the school. You have a clear vision for where you want the school to be and are taking the right steps to secure this. Leaders have vastly improved systems of monitoring and quality assurance since the previous inspection. You now gather, and triangulate, information about the impact of your work. This is enabling you to be proactive in your approach to school improvement and has supported you in ensuring that your plans are tightly focused on the areas that will make the biggest difference for your school. For example, pastoral leaders carefully monitor incidents of poor behaviour, and provide support to pupils when they need it. Leaders collate this information to develop bespoke professional opportunities for staff and provide interventions for pupils when needed. Staff value these opportunities, and benefit from them greatly. This support is helping to ensure improvements at the school are sustainable.

Trustees are highly skilled and provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to school leaders. They have a good knowledge of the school, the progress it has made and the next steps it must take. They have been integral in driving forward improvement at the school. Trustees have ensured that their work is closely aligned to the aspects of the school that require further improvement.

Leaders have developed strong links with external providers to support their work. This work has been well thought out and targeted. Trustees have been proactive in developing these links, and welcome the challenge provided. Staff appreciate and value this support. This work is having a positive impact on the progress of the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Diocese of Lichfield, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Laney  
**His Majesty's Inspector**