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24 March 2015

Robert Jones  
Headteacher  
Four Dwellings Primary Academy  
Quinton Road West  
Quinton  
Birmingham  
B32 1PJ

Dear Mr Jones

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Four Dwellings Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 23 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and the academy sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The academy should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers monitor their classes carefully to check that all pupils are listening and paying attention when the teacher or other pupils speak
- provide greater opportunities for pupils to practise extended writing in topic work
- sharpen the academy improvement plan so that actions are linked to measurable success criteria so that leaders can gauge the impact of their work on pupils' achievement
- ensure continuity in improvement planning given forthcoming changes in leadership.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust, the academy sponsor, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with groups of middle leaders and senior leaders. I undertook brief visits to a number of lessons accompanied by the headteacher and looked at examples of pupils' work. A range of the academy's documents and records were also examined and evaluated, including the academy improvement plan.

## **Context**

A number of changes to staffing and in governance arrangements are about to take place. The Year 2 teacher will leave post at the end of this term. The headteacher will leave at the end of the academic year. The current governing body is to be dissolved and replaced by a new management board.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher and leaders at the academy have taken swift action to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. The range of work that has already been undertaken demonstrates leaders' ambitions for the academy to become a good school.

Leaders have produced a detailed action plan that directly tackles the areas of weakness identified in the previous inspection. This plan has a clear focus on improving leadership and management and the quality of teaching. The timescales for implementing actions are quick, but achievable and reflect a sense of urgency. Some targets in the plan do not state the impact that leaders' actions will have on pupils' achievement clearly enough. For example, actions taken to raise the level of challenge for the most able pupils are not linked to targets that show quicker progress for this group of pupils. The key activities stipulated in the plan run up to the end of the academic year. Leaders now need to consider how this improvement strategy will develop in the longer-term. This is particularly important in order to ensure continuity in improvements given forthcoming changes in leadership.

Teachers have undertaken a range of relevant training to improve their skills. External support has been commissioned to support teachers in strengthening their approaches to mathematical problem-solving. This has included follow-up work with teachers in different phases. Training has also been delivered on how to set and share 'learning objectives' so that lessons, including reading lessons, are better focused on developing pupils' learning and skills. Other aspects of training have sought to improve the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. An additional focus has been placed on teachers offering high quality written feedback in response to pupils' work so that this helps pupils to make progress. The raised expectations of teachers are clearly set out in the academy's revised teaching and learning manual. This document stipulates a number of 'non-negotiables' to make certain that

teachers are accountable for following the academy's guidance for delivering good lessons.

Leaders have ensured that all teachers at the academy are helped to improve their teaching through a personalised coaching plan.

Leaders check the work of teachers through regular monitoring activities that include visiting lessons and looking closely at pupils' work. Recent records of the monitoring of teaching shows that leaders are now better focused on the impact that teachers' work is having on pupils' learning and progress. Leaders also offer clear feedback to teachers and share examples of good practice so that teachers understand what they need to do to improve aspects of their teaching. These checks have been further supplemented by termly 'QUAD' visits from the academy sponsor who provide a thorough and useful external review of work of leaders and teachers.

During my tour of the academy, I was able to see the impact of some of the training that teachers have received. Many books, particularly in English and mathematics, were well marked and opportunities were given to pupils to improve their work based on the guidance their teacher offered. In lessons, most teachers set a clear direction for pupils' learning and regularly reviewed pupils' progress. This helped pupils to focus on what skills they were working on and understand how well they were learning.

Teachers also used cues and prompts to gain the attention of their class. These often work successfully. However, teachers are not yet checking carefully enough that all pupils are paying attention and listening when the teacher or other pupils are speaking. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they should. There was a noticeable difference in the quality of marking in pupils' topic work and in their English and mathematics books. Opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in writing at length in new contexts are also missed. Leaders are aware of this and have made sure that new curriculum plans that will be in place next term address this issue.

Considerable progress has been made in rewriting the foundation curriculum and the fine planning of this is well underway. This planning shows greater opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, cultural and social understanding and awareness of modern British values. Leaders now need to consider how they will assess the impact of these aspects of the curriculum on pupils' knowledge, understanding and attitudes.

Following continued concerns raised about the effectiveness of the governing body, current governance arrangements will be dissolved and a management board implemented in its place. This will include the current Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, as well as experienced leaders from other schools and the Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust. This group will provide a

sharper focus on monitoring the implementation of the academy action plan and offer leaders the challenge that has been lacking in the past.

Information provided by the academy in relation to the achievement of current pupils on-roll shows that the academy expects improved attainment in Key Stage 1 and better rates of progress for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 this academic year.

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

### **External Support**

The academy sponsor closely scrutinises the impact of leaders' work and provides a good level of challenge. Termly 'QUAD' visits offer a thorough review of the academy's work and offers detailed feedback to leaders to supplement the information gathered through their routine monitoring activities. The Regional Director of Education for the Academies Enterprise Trust has a clear understanding of the strengths of the academy and what areas need to be further developed. Structural changes to governance demonstrate the sponsor's robust response to overcoming barriers to the academy becoming a good school.

The sponsor now needs to ensure that further opportunities from within the expertise of the Academies Enterprise Trust network are offered to support the training needs of teachers and leaders. They also need to make certain that a replacement for the current headteacher is appointed who will drive forward further improvements and secure the academy's future as a good or outstanding school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham local authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA)
- Department For academies
- Director of Children's Services