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Mrs Alison Flack
Executive Headteacher
Weston St Mary Church of England Primary School
Small Drove
Weston
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Lincolnshire
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Dear Mrs Flack

Special measures monitoring inspection of Weston St Mary Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 15–16 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 2017.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2017.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
 - high-quality senior leaders are in place
 - middle leaders are in place and are supported to develop the skills they need to be effective in their role
 - the school's use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, is monitored efficiently and addresses well the needs of pupils
 - the curriculum meets the needs of pupils, excites their interests and prepares them well for their next stage in education
 - governors have effective oversight and an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - governors monitor the impact of external government funding, including the pupil premium, and make sure that eligible pupils benefit
 - external support is closely monitored and that it has the desired impact to improve the school at the accelerated pace that is needed.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and therefore pupils' outcomes, by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities that focus closely on what all pupils need to learn in order that they make good progress.
 - rapidly improving the teaching of all subjects and particularly writing across the school, including in the early years.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that an effective behaviour policy is in place and is understood and consistently applied by all staff in order to eradicate incidents of poor behaviour, both within and outside classrooms
 - ensuring that pupils learn how to lead safe and healthy lives and are prepared for life in modern Britain.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 15 May 2018 to 16 May 2018

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with: the executive headteacher; the head of school; the trust chief executive officer, who is also chair of the governing body; three governors; the key stage 1 teacher; the science coordinator who is based at the partner school; and the school administration assistant. The inspector spoke with parents and carers and pupils. The inspector visited both classes and evaluated pupils' work. A range of documents were scrutinised, including the schools post-Ofsted action plans, the school's self-evaluation, behaviour logs, governors' monitors visits and minutes of meetings, parents' questionnaire and the school's current assessment information.

Context

The previous headteacher left the school at in July 2017. The executive headteacher and the head of school were seconded to the school at the time of the last inspection. These posts were made permanent from September 2017. The executive headteacher is responsible for Weston St Mary and Whaplode Primary schools. Leaders have established close links between the two schools, including staff sharing responsibilities for subject leadership across the two schools.

There has been a considerable change in staffing since the last inspection. The head of school is currently teaching in the mornings in key stage 2, having moved from key stage 1 following the departure of the key stage 2 teacher.

Teaching assistants have been changed and replaced with two more qualified support staff who have specialist skills in the early years and a higher-level teaching assistant qualification.

Following the last inspection, the trust removed delegated functions from the school's governing body. Membership of the governing body has changed considerably since the last inspection. Governors from the partner school joined the governing body. Only one governor remains who was on the governing body at the previous inspection.

The number of pupils on the school's roll has fallen since the last inspection. There are currently no children in the early years.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The trust has been swift in securing strong leadership since the last inspection. The permanent appointment of the executive headteacher and the head of school has provided much-needed strength and stability to the school. Middle leadership

capacity has been strengthened through shared subject responsibility between the school and the partner school. Leaders are coaching staff at Weston St Mary to take a greater role in whole-school improvement and subject development, although this is in the very early stages.

The governing body has been strengthened considerably by the introduction of experienced governors from the partner school. A review of governance has been completed and identified areas for improvement have been incorporated in the school's action plans, which set out a clear pathway for improvement. The trust have thoroughly risk-assessed all aspects of the school and are aware of where future problems may arise.

Governors have a secure understanding of the challenges the school faces, and are determined to bring about permanent and sustained change for good. Governors receive regular information about how well pupils are progressing, and they are using this to challenge leaders. Governors' frequent and effective monitoring of the school's action plan has ensured that changes made to improve the school have been carried out in a timely manner. Governing body meetings are purposeful and are used effectively to drive improvement.

The pupil premium review has been carried out that clearly identifies the priorities set out by the new leadership team, and how funding is targeted to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have directed support to improve the quality of teaching to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive appropriate support in class. Leaders are creative in providing the right support for pupils and monitor carefully the success of provision on the progress that pupils make. Governors have monitored the spending of the pupil premium funding carefully. They are regularly challenging leaders to prove that the use of the funding is influencing pupils' progress.

Leaders took decisive action to completely overhaul the curriculum. This has resulted in all subjects being taught across all year groups and throughout the school year. Plans for key stage 2 to be split into lower and upper key stages have also ensured that pupils are taught appropriately for their ability. Pupils' workbooks show that all national curriculum subjects are taught, and topic books are used to record learning in these over a term. There are currently no children in the early years, so it was not possible to judge how well the early years curriculum meets children's needs.

The governing body has monitored the implementation of the new curriculum, through visiting classrooms, viewing displays and looking at pupils' books. Pupils talk about how the topics they are now taught are interesting and enjoyable, and say what they have learned in each. They are particularly enthused by their science lessons. Leaders have put in place a programme to monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This includes pupils' progress meetings, analysing work in books and lesson observations. Leaders have linked performance-management targets to teachers' skills and pupils' progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers now plan for groups of pupils to provide different levels of challenge. Where teaching is stronger, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to ensure that pupils are being taught at the correct level and are challenged to achieve more. Teachers assess pupils' understanding within lessons and use this information to develop learning further. Teachers plan across the two schools in order to share ideas and good practice.

The quality of teaching is not consistent across the school. Some teachers are not skilled enough in using assessment information to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged. Pupils' workbooks show that some teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are still too low, and there are occasions where pupils are repeating work that they have previously completed. Due to a legacy of poor teaching, particularly in key stage 2, pupils are working below standards typical for their age.

Leaders have introduced new approaches to develop pupils' writing skills in key stage 1, and to their knowledge and use of spelling, grammar and punctuation in all year groups. Information and communication technology is used effectively to develop pupils' writing. Teachers identify areas where pupils required clarification and provide additional support or challenge

The mathematics leader has introduced a new scheme to raise staff expectations of what pupils should be able to do, and to develop teachers' subject knowledge. Teachers are beginning to develop pupils' mathematical skills in a systematic way. The mathematics subject leader has encouraged staff to use a wider range of approaches to demonstrating concepts to pupils.

Pupils' science workbooks show that they now regularly carry out scientific investigations. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to test theories, hypothesise and predict. The development of pupils' spelling skills is inconsistent. In some books, where the teacher has identified pupils' incorrect spelling, the teacher does not check their corrections. As a result, pupils sometimes continue to misspell words.

The quality of teaching across the school still varies. While leaders have been rigorous in their approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning, they have been unable to recruit new teaching staff for September 2018, and the head of school had been required to take on a greater teaching commitment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have taken decisive action to improve behaviour throughout the school. The school's behaviour policy has been rewritten and staff have had training in how to manage pupils' behaviour. Staff expectations of pupils' behaviour have been

raised considerably and all staff tackle consistently poor behaviour. There has been a significant reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions and the school's behaviour records show a significant reduction in the number of incidents involving poor conduct.

During the inspection, the inspector witnessed no significant incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils are polite to visitors and are respectful to each other. In lessons, pupils are generally well behaved. Staff deal with the very few incidents of undesirable behaviour efficiently and effectively. During my visit, pupils who have struggled to manage their behaviour in the past, participated well in class and were enthusiastic to talk about their learning. They were appreciative of how staff have helped them to improve their behaviour and to develop as learners.

Parents and pupils agree that the number of incidents of poor behaviour have reduced. Pupils say behaviour has improved since the new executive headteacher and head of school joined the school. Pupils say that they are no longer unkind to each other and if there are any issues, these are dealt with well by staff.

The curriculum has been developed to include opportunities for pupils to learn about life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about different faiths, they are beginning to understand the similarities and differences between religions. Pupils have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Assemblies explain to pupils how to keep themselves safe, including by wearing bicycle helmets, washing their hands and what to do in the event of an emergency. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online, when using social media and online games.

In lessons, some pupils lack resilience and perseverance. Pupils demonstrate a reliance on adults to direct them in their learning, either by losing focus once adults have walked away from them, or by adults over supporting pupils. Due to a legacy of low expectations, a few pupils do drift off task, and are not always quick enough to complete tasks. Some low-level incidents between pupils during lessons detract from learning.

Current attendance figures show that overall attendance is below the national average. However, due to small numbers of pupils, persistent absence affects average attendance figures. The school's own analysis of attendance data shows that once persistent absence figures are removed attendance is above the national average. Leaders have been tenacious in securing the regular attendance of pupils, and in the case of persistent absence have badgered the local authority to ensure that pupils are safeguarded and their needs are met elsewhere.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders have set challenging targets in order to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress. The school's own assessment information shows that most pupils had achieved their aspirational targets for reading, writing and mathematics up until

February 2018. The proportion of pupils working at the standard typical for their age remains low. However, pupils are beginning to make the progress necessary for them to raise their attainment closer to the national average.

Leaders have ensured that teachers have higher expectations of what pupils should be able to achieve in writing. When comparing pupils' writing from September 2017 to that at present, their workbooks show that they have made progress in line with the school's aspirational targets, with some pupils making more rapid progress. Gaps in learning are closing.

The school's internal assessment information shows that most disadvantaged pupils have made progress in line with the leader of the provision for these pupils' aspirational targets in reading, writing and mathematics. All disadvantaged pupils have made progress. However, for the pupils who did not meet the aspirational target, the pupil premium funding has been utilised to provide additional support.

Leaders have ensured that targets for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities appropriately and ambitiously focus on closing gaps in learning, as well as targeting specific needs. Appropriate small steps have been identified in order for pupils to overcome specific barriers. The majority of pupils have made progress in line with the school's target. Where they have not, additional support has been provided and advice sought where appropriate.

External support

The trust has provided support for the school by securing the permanent appointment of the leadership team. The school's improvement advisor visits the school regularly and provides support and advice to the leadership team in the implementation of the school's action plan. The trust's chief executive officer is now the chair of the governing body and is providing support through regular visits, for example to monitor the action plan, and challenging the leadership team. Members of the trust also carry out strategic visits to monitor actions and to complete risk assessments, in order to determine the school's overall effectiveness.

Staff from the partner school are adding capacity to the leadership team in the form of shared subject responsibilities, as well as planning together and sharing good practice. Headteachers from across the trust meet regularly to support each other and to share practice. Subject leaders meet regularly to develop teaching and learning in their subject. The school participates in the Lincolnshire literacy project in order to develop the teaching of reading and writing across the school.