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Tracey McCarthy
Headteacher
Swaffham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School
Brandon Road
Swaffham
Norfolk
PE37 7EA

Dear Miss McCarthy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Swaffham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 2014, 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 which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held between the inspector and the Chair of the Governing Body. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, no changes have been made to teaching staff. An experienced senior leader has been employed on a temporary basis for three days each week to add capacity to the leadership and management of the school. Following discussions between you and your governors, the Diocese of Norwich and the Department for Education a decision has been reached for the school to become a sponsored academy early in 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Plans are in place to improve the school. However, these plans are not fully focused upon all of the issues raised in the previous inspection. Not all five areas for improvement and the actions to be taken to resolve them are highlighted well enough.

Actions to improve the quality of teaching include detailed procedures for monitoring teaching and learning in lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. However, action is less clear about the specific training and development opportunities to be provided for staff to help them gain a clearer understanding of what constitutes good teaching. Some priorities lack challenging, measurable targets to monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement, particularly those who are more able or are eligible for free school meals.

Staff training to implement new procedures for assessing pupils' work and how to use this information to inform lesson planning has been arranged for the start of September 2014. You feel that pupils are now making better progress than they were at the time of the previous inspection. However, your own current data on pupils' attainment and progress show that this is not the case in all years, or in all subjects. Results in this year's national tests at the end of Year 6 are expected to be lower than those achieved last year in reading and in mathematics. It is unclear in the improvement plan what specific actions will be taken to resolve this.

Actions to improve pupils' behaviour include new procedures to monitor how effectively all staff manage pupils' behaviour in lessons. Targets to gauge the improvements made are not challenging. Currently, it will take too long to ensure that every member of staff applies consistently the procedures to manage pupils' behaviour.

Improvement plans do not include how the actions to drive improvement of each leader and manager are to be measured. Also, there are no means of checking that you and your colleagues are driving improvements within the given timescales.

An external review of governance, led by the local authority took place in June 2014, highlighted what governors do well and what they need to do to improve. Actions needed to strengthen safeguarding records, keep pupils safe in school and provide pupils and parents with further guidance about e-safety are already under way. The single central record checks on the suitability of staff are complete and are being scrutinised by an appointed governor. Plans to improve the overall effectiveness of governors in improving the school do not include regular interim criteria by which to measure the impact they are having.

You are beginning to engage fully with the local authority to aid the school's improvement. A suitable statement of action is in place and an improvement board has met since the inspection to monitor the progress being made. The local authority has also brokered additional support from an external consultant and from an experienced senior leader. These actions are adding further useful support to improve the school but these arrangements are temporary. Currently, it is unclear how improvements to the school will be sustained.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

It is recommended that the following actions take place before the next monitoring inspection:

- amend the improvement plan so that each of the five areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report are clearly prioritised
- ensure that actions to tackle each area for improvement include suitable targets to measure at key intervals the impact of improvements being made
- ensure that plans to improve the effectiveness of governance include regular interim criteria to check and evaluate the impact of their work.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection without the approval of HMI.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk and the Diocese of Norwich. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector