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30 October 2015

Mr Lee Regan  
Executive Headteacher  
Bramfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Bridge Street  
Bramfield  
Halesworth  
Suffolk  
IP19 9HZ

Dear Mr Regan

**Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Bramfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 2015, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2015. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

**Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.**

This letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the interim executive board, the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk County Council and the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015

- Improve teaching and, hence, achievement by:
  - ensuring that all pupils, including those in mixed year-groups, are taught at a level that consistently challenges them
  - paying particular attention to the challenge given to the most able
  - improving planning, marking and written work so that standards are consistently high
  - tackling the teaching and learning of mathematics in those year groups and areas where progress in this subject is weaker
  - ensuring that teaching assistants are deployed effectively
  - devising a lesson observation system that monitors rigorously the quality of pupils' learning, and whether groups of pupils are being sufficiently stretched.
  
- Improve leadership by:
  - ensuring that self-evaluations are rigorously self-critical and lead to purposeful, clear action plans, the outcomes of which are closely monitored
  - making sure that governors are regularly supplied with clear summaries of the school's performance, including that of groups, and that these summaries consistently reference this performance to national expectations
  - ensuring that the coordinator for special educational needs has appropriate resources to develop materials for the delivery of mathematics to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
  
- Improve governance by:
  - ensuring that governors are urgently trained in the analysis of school performance data, and that they understand which aspects of these data are most important for their analysis of school performance
  - setting challenging school performance targets and monitoring progress towards them rigorously and frequently
  - ensuring that these targets and timescales are recorded in such a way that they can be easily checked, and that governors hold the school and senior leaders to account if they are not met.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 October 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the interim executive headteacher, the head of school, a group of pupils, two members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. The purpose of the inspection was to review the school's action plan as this was not fit for purpose at the first monitoring inspection.

### **Context**

The substantive executive headteacher retired at the end of the summer term. An interim executive headteacher has been appointed for this academic year. The head of school has been made substantive in her post. A teaching and learning lead has been appointed for two terms to work across all four schools in the federation. The governing body was disbanded at the end of the summer term and an IEB has been in place since July 2015.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The quality of leadership and management at the school has improved since the last monitoring inspection. The interim executive headteacher has made a prompt start to addressing the school's weaknesses since he joined the federation in September. For example, he has employed a teaching and learning lead to work with individual teachers and provide coaching based on their specific needs.

Pupils expressed very positive opinions about the new interim executive headteacher. They discussed with the inspector the reasons why they are no longer allowed to call teaching assistants by their first name; pupils understood that salutations such as 'Mr' and 'Mrs' are a sign of respect and agreed with the interim executive headteacher's decision that this should be extended to all members of staff, not just teachers.

The IEB has met twice since it was formed in July. The members of the IEB have a wide range of experience of school governance, including successful tenures as chairs of governing bodies, members of school improvement boards and members of other IEBs. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the IEB in ensuring prompt improvement and in holding the school's leaders to account.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The school's action planning has improved since the first monitoring inspection. The strategic development plan provides a clear vision for the federation as a whole, with the strapline 'keeping education at the heart of village life' becoming increasingly familiar in and around the school.

- The school's action plan has been thoroughly overhauled since the first monitoring inspection and is now fit for purpose. It includes measurable success criteria, clear monitoring activity, and specific and appropriate actions. The plan has been reviewed and updated.
- The increased emphasis on working as a federation of schools is also improving the quality of leadership at Bramfield. For example, the mathematics leader's responsibility for the subject across the federation has enabled her to have a greater impact at Bramfield. Together with the rest of the federation, the school has adopted a 'mastery' approach to teaching the subject and this is beginning to ensure that pupils are challenged fully by the work that they are given to do.
- There is now a much greater emphasis on improving the quality of teaching in the school. The school's records show that monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is now more frequent, including observations of individual lessons and 'learning walks' throughout the school. This monitoring activity is used to provide staff with specific ways that their teaching can be improved.
- A number of strengths in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment were evident during this monitoring inspection. Pupils showed very good attitudes to learning in the lessons seen. For example, in a Year 5/6 science lesson, pupils showed great interest in their investigation and persevered for an extended period of time, because the teacher's explanations were clear and the task was interesting.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Although the school's self-evaluation is now more thorough and more self-critical, there remains room for improvement. It is important that the school judges itself against the descriptors in Ofsted's current *School inspection handbook* (August 2015) rather than those from the previous inspection framework.

### **External support**

The local authority supports the school well, for example by helping the school's leaders to write a more rigorous action plan. The local authority appointed an IEB to strengthen the governance of the school. Local authority advisers continue to provide training and support to the school, and to the federation, as required.