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22 May 2017

Mr Simon Duffy  
Principal  
Chipping Norton School  
Burford Road  
Chipping Norton  
Oxfordshire  
OX7 5DY

Dear Mr Duffy

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Chipping Norton School**

Following my visit with Mary Davies, Ofsted Inspector, and Gerard Strong, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 May 2017, 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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 action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the school may seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2015**

- Make rapid and secure improvements to the progress of disadvantaged pupils (those who are eligible for government funding known as the pupil premium) by:
  - prioritising their achievement in planning at all levels
  - monitoring the impact of the pupil premium expenditure closely and frequently
  - making sure that their attendance at least matches the average attendance of other pupils nationally
  - ensuring that leaders and governors check that necessary improvements have been made at appropriate points throughout the year.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - setting out in the development plan clear targets and descriptions of what will be achieved at key points in the year to enable senior leaders and governors to monitor the impact of actions throughout the year
  - ensuring that judgements of the quality of teaching take account of its impact on pupils' learning over time
  - improving performance management systems to support better teaching and learning
  - extending senior leaders' and governors' understanding of good and outstanding practice
  - ensuring that governors use a range of information about outcomes for all groups of pupils to offer effective challenge and support to senior leaders.
- Improve the progress of all pupils, especially in English, by ensuring that teaching:
  - provides consistent and high levels of challenge, appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities
  - improves pupils' progress in key stage 3 so that they begin GCSE courses with a strong foundation
  - enables pupils currently in key stage 4 to catch up to make up for previous poor learning
  - eliminates any low level disruption to lessons.

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

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

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 May 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed sections of 30 lessons, all conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work and spoke to pupils in prearranged meetings, in lessons and around the school. Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers, governors (including the chair of the governing body), a group of parents and the chief executive officer (CEO) of River Learning Trust. Inspectors scrutinised school documentation, including safeguarding records, the school's action plan and records of leaders' monitoring. Inspectors considered 133 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire). Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, including at lunch and breaktimes.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit in November 2016, three teachers have left and one full-time and two part-time teachers have joined; five support staff have left and eight have started at the school. A restructure of staffing and leadership is underway. The school joined the River Learning Trust multi-academy trust on 1 March 2017. Consequently, the governing body has reconstituted and become a local governing body within the trust. Membership of the governing body, however, remains stable. The programme of planned monitoring inspections is continuing because, on joining the trust, the school retained its unique reference number.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Senior leaders' determined work has meant that the school continues to improve at a good rate. They have built well on the early successes noted during the last monitoring inspection. In his ambition to make more rapid progress, the headteacher has raised his expectations of all staff. While he rightly recognises where improvements have been made, he knows what is necessary to achieve more for pupils at the school. He is meeting these challenges head-on.

Using the school's action plan, leaders make sure that their work is targeted and coordinated well, checking regularly that it is having the required outcomes. Consequently, the senior leadership team now acts with a clear, shared purpose and delivers demonstrable improvements. As well as leaders' effective efforts to improve pupils' behaviour and raise attendance, ably led by the deputy headteacher, there are three crucial aspects of senior leaders' work which underpin this.

First, the way in which teachers and leaders assess and track pupils' progress has transformed over the last year. The assistant headteacher who has spearheaded this has made sure that it is a clear, useful and rigorous process. It now forms the basis of senior leaders' much stronger checks on teachers' performance and the

way subject leaders are held to account for pupils' progress more incisively. It means that leaders are able to step in much more quickly and decisively when pupils' progress is too slow. Teachers increasingly use this information about pupils' performance to gauge levels of challenge in lessons. In essence, it provides the tools and opportunities for leaders' and teachers' work to be aimed squarely at raising standards in the classroom.

Second, leaders' actions to improve teaching continue apace. The senior teacher who leads this aspect has galvanised the majority of staff, helped leaders act in a united way to make improvements and further refined key approaches to monitoring and improving teaching. Weak teaching is no longer tolerated and leaders are increasingly swift to challenge, support and tackle this where it exists. Equally, there is an evolving culture in the school centred around sharing the best practice in teaching and supporting teachers to develop professionally. Training for teachers is regular and helpful. There is much more discussion among staff about how they can improve their work, based on a widespread ambition to help pupils achieve well.

Third, senior leaders have developed other leaders' roles. In particular, subject leaders now play a more important role in making improvements to teaching and pupils' progress and are eager for this to develop further. Leadership of the sixth form is strong. This is a clear indication of the progress the school has made. Importantly, the English subject leader has led his department particularly well to bring about significant improvements; parents that inspectors spoke to during the inspection recognised the vital contribution he has made to their children's learning in English.

These positive aspects of leaders' work mean that:

- teaching is improving, including in English
- pupils' progress is accelerating in a number of subjects
- pupils' behaviour and attendance are improving
- disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils are achieving more highly in some subjects and year groups.

Alongside these successes, however, serious challenges remain. Senior leaders have yet to act with enough precision to:

- ensure that improvements in teaching are consistent across the school
- improve pupils' outcomes enough in some subjects
- diminish differences between the progress of key groups of pupils across the full range of subjects in key stages 3 and 4, notably disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- establish a clear, fulsome and firmly evidenced view of the school's effectiveness as a whole
- make sure that subject leaders have an equally substantial impact on

improvements

- ensure that additional funding has a demonstrable effect on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, those who need to catch up in literacy and numeracy in Year 7, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Governors' strengthened leadership continues to flourish. They offer insightful challenge and constructive support to the school. Their crucial work to monitor and evaluate the school's improvement is effective. They have managed the transition to the River Learning Trust extremely well, ensuring that this process has caused no interruption to the school's progress. As well as making sure that they hold school leaders stringently to account, governors have welcomed the additional accountability they now have through being part of the trust. Importantly, they understand very clearly how the effective aspects of the ways in which they currently operate will stand the school in good stead going forward.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Leaders have rightly made their high expectations of teaching in key stages 3 and 4 clear, articulated in the 'Chipping Norton Standards' which have been shared with all staff and which have formed the basis of training and support. Chief among these standards are: challenging pupils highly, regardless of their ability (using an approach the school calls 'Bronze, Silver, Gold' challenges); making sure that pupils get high-quality feedback; and improving pupils' work ethic so that they achieve more. These key characteristics invariably feature in the sixth form, where teaching remains effective.

It is clear that leaders have had an impact because, in combination with teachers' hard work, teaching is strengthening overall and some is very effective. Where this is the case, teachers make sure that tasks are both interesting and challenging, using what they now know about pupils' prior learning. This tangibly affects pupils' levels of commitment and engagement, as they invariably work industriously and often with obvious enjoyment. Teaching in English now typifies these qualities and there are examples in a number of other subjects, including mathematics.

Although pupils' work with a range of teachers across different subjects demonstrates that the quality of teaching and learning is improving, leaders have not yet ensured that their high expectations are consistently met across the school. Where they are not evident, pupils do not work as hard or make as much progress; teachers do not challenge pupils highly enough, including some of the most able pupils. While improvements are heading in the right direction overall, therefore, leaders are rightly poised to double their efforts in supporting teachers to improve and tackling any weaknesses swiftly.

The extent to which teachers' feedback complies with the school's assessment policy varies. Some feedback, both in class and in pupils' work, visibly makes a

difference to pupils' subsequent learning. However, this is not yet the case often enough. Pupils have noticed improvements in teaching and teachers' feedback, but also clearly recognise this variability.

Teachers are now more focused than ever on improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In the strongest teaching, pupils get the extra help they need in lessons to make better progress over time. This is often augmented by additional support outside of lessons. However, these strengths do not feature deeply enough in teaching across the school. Also, leaders have not made sure that additional support is sufficiently coordinated with approaches to improving these pupils' progress in lessons. This inconsistency means that, while many disadvantaged pupils are learning more, some still do not get enough help to achieve well.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Leaders, pupils and parents all told inspectors that, on occasion, low-level disruption occurs in some lessons, largely when teaching is weaker. However, it is testament to leaders' and teachers' focused work to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons that inspectors saw no such disruption during this inspection. This is because teachers now apply approaches to pupils' behaviour more consistently and rigorously, something pupils have noticed. Increased levels of challenge in many lessons mean that pupils are more interested and engaged in their work, having no reason to chat when they shouldn't or not work as hard as they should. Behaviour around the school remains orderly and calm. Inspectors did not hear pupils using any bad language. Pupils usually look smart. Instances of bullying are increasingly rare. There is a friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the school, which the majority of parents and pupils appreciate.

The school's work to keep pupils safe remains effective and pupils have regular opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection. Although it does not match other pupils' levels of attendance overall, the impressive work of the attendance officer and the two new 'pupil premium mentors' means that there is evidence that improvements are set to continue. The extra mile they go to support these pupils is mirrored in the school's wider pastoral work. Parents spoken to by inspectors feel that this work is especially strong, citing many examples of when the school had shown great care and sensitivity for pupils, when needed. Parents picked out the work of the deputy headteacher and pastoral leaders for special mention. Students in the sixth form are clear about the improvements that have been made to support their personal development, for example careers advice and guidance, and advice about mental health.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' individual targets in key stages 3 and 4, set at levels which represent good progress if achieved, indicate leaders' and teachers' ambitions for every pupil. Reports to parents about their children's progress are now clearer and more accessible. Teachers are sharper about how they plan lessons to help pupils reach their targets. Pupils are better able to articulate what they need to do to make good progress. There is an increasingly transparent process, therefore, which helpfully involves teachers, parents and pupils. This is a big step forward.

Better teaching in many classes means that pupils' outcomes are improving in a range of areas. Crucially, Year 11 pupils are making much stronger progress overall. The difference between Year 11 disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of other pupils has halved on average and their attainment has nearly doubled. While boys are still not making as much progress as girls, this is improving. Year 11 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are achieving more than in the past. In general, the most able pupils are achieving more highly.

These features are, in particular, mirrored in the significant improvements in English, but strong improvements can be seen in other subjects too. This positive overall picture, however, masks specific issues in some subjects. Most importantly, differences between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and those of other pupils have not diminished enough in art, computer science, some technology subjects, history or mathematics. About 40% of Year 11 pupils take GCSE science rather than single sciences; the progress of these pupils has not improved rapidly enough.

This mixed success extends to other year groups too. In Year 10, boys are achieving more. Disadvantaged pupils' progress has accelerated to match that of other pupils. However, most-able pupils are not making the progress they are capable of. In key stage 3, the majority of most-able pupils are on track to meet their targets in English and mathematics, but not in science. Conversely, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress in science than in English or mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are rising in English and science, but not so markedly in mathematics.

These indications of improvement, alongside the areas of relative weakness, are due to inconsistencies in teaching. Leaders understand that levelling-out the rate of pupils' progress across the school in order to raise achievement for all is now a key priority. At the time of the last monitoring inspection, sixth-form leaders recognised that they needed to improve students' rates of progress in Year 12 to more closely match those in Year 13; they have achieved this through honed, targeted action and a meticulous understanding of the issues. Leaders know that it is this level of precision that is needed in key stages 3 and 4 on a much larger scale.

## **External support**

The CEO of River Learning Trust has continued to visit the school very regularly since November 2016. Until 1 March, this could be classed as 'external' support, but now it is not. He has successfully utilised expertise from across the multi-academy trust to provide effective support and challenge to the school. He is very 'hands-on', bringing great credibility with him, but his work is clearly aimed at helping the school to become fully self-sufficient as soon as possible. His work includes: moderating leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching and learning; working with senior leaders to sharpen their actions; providing clear advice about what aspects of teaching need to improve; and working with subject leaders to develop their roles. He knows the school well, maintaining an ambitious but realistic vision for its progress. Not all parents are, as yet, clear about what the changes to governance mean for the school since it joined River Learning Trust; equally, some parents who spoke with inspectors are unclear about how joining the trust will benefit pupils.