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7 July 2017

Miss Gillian Wilson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Wilson

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Oswald's Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Donald Parker, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 June 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 2016. 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.

The school may seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's

services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2016.**

- Swiftly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least consistently good across all subjects by:
  - increasing expectations of what pupils can do so they are consistently high
  - setting work that matches the needs and abilities of pupils and challenges them appropriately
  - making sure that pupils of all abilities present their work neatly and take pride in their work
  - skilfully questioning pupils to probe and deepen their understanding
  - assessing pupils' learning to adjust work appropriately if they are not making good progress.
- Rapidly improve outcomes for all groups of pupils to make sure that they are at least good by:
  - accelerating pupils' progress so that attainment is at least average in reading, writing and mathematics
  - closing gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
  - deepening pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects, especially science, history, geography and modern foreign languages
  - expecting pupils to write at length in a wide range of subjects to deepen their knowledge
  - strengthening the application of mathematics across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the provision in the early years so that:
  - children can access more reading, writing and number activities in the outdoor area
  - boys are engaged more effectively in learning so that their progress in reading, writing and mathematical skills improves at a faster rate.
- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels by making sure that:
  - teachers' knowledge is strengthened to secure good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and across a wide range of subjects for all groups of pupils
  - teachers are sufficiently skilled to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities have their needs met and make good progress

- subject leaders ensure that the school’s policy on marking is applied and incisive feedback is provided to which pupils respond in detail so they improve their work
- subject leaders check pupils’ work thoroughly to ensure that teachers are assessing pupils’ work accurately in all subjects
- pupils’ attendance is at least average and persistent absenteeism is below average
- pupils’ attitudes to learning are consistently positive with all the adults who teach them
- pupil premium funding is used effectively to strengthen the attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- senior leaders ensure that governors are provided with reliable information to make informed decisions.

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.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 to 21 June 2017**

### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of school, a range of school leaders, a group of pupils, a sample of parents, two representatives of the academy transformation board, and the chief executive officer and primary director of the multi-academy trust.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit there have been significant changes to the school's staffing arrangements. In April 2017, the multi-academy trust appointed a head of school and the executive headteacher left. An assistant headteacher and two teachers have also left the school. One teacher and a new assistant headteacher have joined the school. Long-term supply teachers are covering a teacher who is on maternity leave and a class where there is a teacher vacancy. At the time of the monitoring inspection, one teacher who is also part of the leadership team was absent due to illness.

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

The appointment of an effective head of school has resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching in a short space of time. She is driven and passionate about moving the school forward on its journey of improvement, centred on her clear vision for teaching, learning and assessment. A more consistent structure for teaching and learning is beginning to take shape and has contributed to the recent improvements being seen. However, this is not yet a consistent picture throughout the school. Establishing the newly introduced systems and continuing to embed the developments over the coming months will be paramount.

Trustees are now receiving more robust information about the impact of leaders' actions. This is helping them to check how effectively the head of school's vision is being realised. Information from leaders is received in a timely manner to support governors in challenging the speed of improvement and the impact on pupils' outcomes. Governors are appropriately skilled to enable effective challenge. For example, they have questioned whether targets set for improving the quality of teaching are ambitious enough. Leaders accept that the targets set will need to be more demanding if pupils' outcomes are to improve at the rapid rate required.

The head of school is accurate in her evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning. She correctly identifies each teacher's next steps for development. This has contributed to a swiftly produced action plan, with a strong focus on teaching and learning, which she has based on her initial evaluations. Precise actions and weekly milestones are helping leaders to check the impact of their actions and to make adjustments where necessary to enable rapid improvement. The wider school

leadership team is also benefiting from seeing this effective model for school improvement. Senior leaders and subject leaders are now well placed to adapt a similar model for their own areas of responsibility.

The head of school has given staff the confidence to make changes to their teaching. Staff are very positive about the improvements being made by leaders and they highly value the support and development opportunities they are receiving. In turn, staff are becoming increasingly motivated as they see the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning.

The ambitious plan to tackle pupils' attendance is continuing to reap rewards with sustained improvements in attendance overall and for specific groups of pupils.

Leadership of the early years has continued to develop further. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception this year is set to exceed leaders' targets as a result of the improvements made. The early years is now one of the school's greatest strengths.

On her arrival, the head of school has rightly prioritised the urgent improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. This has been the greatest focus for leaders recently. However, there are still numerous areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection which are not yet showing enough improvement, for example improving the impact of leadership at all levels. Leaders are aware that the short-term focus on teaching and learning now needs to be aligned with other aspects of improvement identified in the school's overarching improvement plan. The development of middle leaders in improving standards and progress across the curriculum, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is critical to the school's next stage of development.

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

Where the strongest teaching exists, there is more rapid improvement in the rate of progress being achieved by pupils. However, while teaching is improving as a result of recent actions taken by leaders, there is still too much variability throughout school. Progress has continued to be hampered by staffing changes and absence, but actions taken by the trust are beginning to secure a more stable staff team.

A particular improvement in supporting more effective learning is the development of pupils' independence. Most teachers are now using a range of resources to support this effectively. For example, pupils make good use of visual prompts to help them if they are stuck or to enable them to use more challenging grammatical structures in their writing.

The use of questioning by staff to develop pupils' independence in their learning varies. In the best examples seen, teachers' questioning challenges pupils and

encourages deeper understanding. However, in too many cases, staff are quick to tell pupils how to complete a task without first letting them have a go. This means pupils have limited opportunities to think for themselves, try out their ideas and solve problems.

The use of discussion between pupils to develop their learning also varies between classes. Where pupils have frequent opportunities to share their ideas with others and explain their thinking, this supports them in making more rapid progress as they are more involved in the learning process. In contrast, where pupils' ability to articulate their learning is under-developed, they are more reliant on support from staff and often do not move on with their learning as quickly.

Leaders have made sure that assessments are accurate and reliable in Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, where there have been moderation activities with other schools within the trust and through the local authority. However, leaders have recognised that assessment in other year groups is not as reliable or accurate. They accept that this is an urgent priority as teachers need to have a clear awareness of pupils' starting points, next steps and targets which are ambitious enough to take account of any previous underachievement. This will enable teachers to plan more effectively for particular groups of pupils such as those who are disadvantaged, based on an understanding of the expectations for the pupils' year group and the need for rapid progress to be made.

Likewise, assessment of subjects other than English and mathematics is still in the early stages of development. Until leaders have established an accurate assessment system for such subjects, the impact of leaders' actions to improve standards will continue to have minimal effect.

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

A more calm and purposeful atmosphere is evident throughout school, both during lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors, for example holding doors open for adults and using good manners. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils' learning behaviours have also improved as a result of higher expectations from staff and tasks which are becoming more challenging and demand higher levels of independence. There is now very little low-level disruption in classes and pupils usually demonstrate good attitudes to their learning.

Pupils have a limited understanding of fundamental British values such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. This is preventing them from being sufficiently prepared for life in modern Britain and in making a positive contribution to their school and wider community.

Effective leadership of attendance has continued and actions taken are encouraging parents and pupils to value good attendance. Leaders' relentless follow-up when

pupils are absent is effective in bringing about the improvements seen. Attendance overall has improved further and is currently at 95.9%, compared to 95.1% at the last visit and 92.5% last year. Persistent absence has reduced further from 11.7% at the last visit to 9.9% at present.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Too much teaching is not yet effectively meeting the needs of all pupil groups and therefore, except in the early years and Years 5 and 6, progress is not rapid enough. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not showing the considerable improvements needed.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have not made enough progress to enable the targets set for meeting the phonics standard by the end of the year to be achieved. Similarly, by the end of key stage 1, not enough pupils are on track to reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, according to the targets set by leaders. This means that too many pupils are underachieving and are not as well prepared as they should be to access learning in the next key stage. However, by the end of key stage 2, pupils are on track to reach the targets set for reading, writing and mathematics due to the accelerated progress they have made this year. Over time though, their progress has not been sufficient to enable the proportion meeting the expected standard to be in line with attainment seen nationally.

Outcomes in the early years have risen considerably, from 50.9% achieving a good level of development last year to 67% this year so far. This represents strong progress given children's starting points on entry to school. Boys' performance, which was previously of concern, has also improved as a result of effective actions taken by leaders. The challenge for school leaders is to continue the positive start to school for this cohort of pupils as they move into Year 1.

The presentation of pupils' work continues to show improvement. Work in pupils' books confirms that pupils are more productive and are clearly taking greater pride in their work. Writing 'flip-ups' are helping pupils and teachers to see the improvements made in pupils' writing over time. This is supporting the quality of writing pupils are producing.

Where the lowest-attaining group of pupils have significant gaps in their learning, for example with spelling, teachers do not always pick up on basic errors. This limits their progress.

### **External support**

The sponsor has enabled a seamless transition between changes in leadership, which has prevented a stalling in progress from the first monitoring visit. The successful appointment of a head of school has ensured that the school has



increased capacity to continue its journey of improvement in order to exit special measures in a timely fashion. Strategic and operational support for the new head of school, provided by a national leader of education and a local leader of education, is allowing the head of school to focus solely on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This strategy has resulted in more rapid improvements being made in the recent weeks since her appointment.