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Mrs Vicky Matthews
Ulceby St Nicholas Church of England Primary School
Church Lane
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Lincolnshire
DN39 6TB

Dear Mrs Matthews

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ulceby St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Following my visit 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 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 September 2016.

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 school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not 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 North Lincolnshire. This

letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2016

- Urgently improve safeguarding arrangements, by:
 - ironing out any confusion about accountability and putting in place effective arrangements to regularly check procedures and recording
 - thoroughly auditing all aspects of safeguarding policy and practice, then taking action to correct any shortcomings
 - ensuring that all staff and governors are trained to a better standard, updating training regularly, and checking that all adults fully understand all of their duties.
- Improve leadership and governance, by:
 - ensuring that senior and middle leaders carry out more regular and thorough checks on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning
 - strengthening improvement plans, identifying precise targets that can be measured at regular points throughout the school year
 - reviewing arrangements for governance, including the scheme of delegation
 - ensuring that governors are properly trained and that they receive more detailed information so they can challenge leaders more effectively.
- Further improve teaching so that pupils' outcomes improve, by:
 - bringing all teaching up to the quality of the best in the school
 - making sure that teachers identify the most-able pupils and consistently give these pupils challenging work so more of them reach higher standards
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to routinely attempt really tricky problems in mathematics and to develop their reasoning skills
 - improving pupils' reading comprehension skills.
- Improve provision in the early years, by:
 - conducting more rigorous risk assessments
 - more fully involving parents in their children's learning and assessment
 - improving the quality of resources inside and outside and ensuring that children are challenged in their independent play and exploration.

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

The lead inspector recommends that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 20 to 21 June 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher; representatives of the governing body, including the chair, and designated safeguarding governor; and representatives of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust. The inspector observed learning in classes alongside the executive headteacher. They both undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work in books. The inspector checked the school's record of security checks on staff and other documents relating to safeguarding. Meetings were held with pupils and middle leaders and the inspector met with parents at the start of the school day.

Context

Since the previous inspection, leaders of the trust wasted no time in appointing an interim executive headteacher, to strengthen the leadership of the school. The trust has secured this position for the forthcoming academic year. The existing headteacher became the head of school and has subsequently resigned his post. He will leave at the end of the academic year. A seconded head of school has been appointed for September 2017. Of the six teaching staff at the school at the time of the inspection, three have resigned their post. Appointments for the forthcoming academic year are already completed. A new and experienced chair of the governing body was appointed in March 2017 following the resignation of the previous chair.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher has a clear and honest view of how much still needs to be done to secure the overall effectiveness of the school. She displays great resilience and determination to lead staff through this improvement journey. She has wasted no time in ensuring that all safeguarding procedures are fully compliant with statutory recommendations and has worked tirelessly to ensure that all welfare arrangements are in place so that pupils are safe. She has organised extensive safeguarding training for all staff and governors so that all members of staff are fully aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe. There is now a designated safeguarding governor who undertakes regular and detailed reviews of practice and policy. There have already been several audits of the school's policy and procedures for safeguarding to ensure the shortcomings raised in the inspection report have been addressed and to ensure that, moving forward, procedures remain robust and secure.

Intense support and challenge from the trust has supported leaders in taking effective actions towards improvement. A strong partnership exists between the school and the trust. The trust's school effectiveness adviser has been invaluable in supporting both the executive headteacher and governors where it is needed most.

This includes: developing governance, checking that safeguarding arrangements are robust, and checking that the quality of teaching and learning is leading to improved pupils' outcomes. Ongoing support is in place to support further improvements.

The trust's statement of action (required by the Department for Education following an academy being put into special measures) is fit for purpose. It has provided a solid foundation for the school's improvement plan because it sets out the strategic actions and identifies the right priorities for improvement. The school improvement plan extends until the end of the academic year 2018. It sets out the specific actions and strategies for strengthening leadership and management across the school, improving the quality of teaching and learning and improving overall pupils' outcomes. There are clearly identified strategies for checking the impact of actions because a detailed strategy for the regular review of the plan is in place. Individuals are identified to carry out these checks. Nevertheless, this element of the school's work needs to be improved further by developing subject leader action plans to supplement the school improvement plan and by identifying specific targets for the achievement of key groups of pupils.

Governors have undertaken a review of their work and developed an action plan which identifies priorities for improvement. Governors are well underway to addressing the actions in their action plan. The trust has retained all delegated responsibilities of governance, but the quality of challenge provided to leaders of the school is already showing signs of improvement. A cycle of monitoring is in place and governors who have designated responsibilities are already undertaking their roles with due diligence. This work is in its earliest stages but is already showing signs of governors holding leaders to account more effectively. The current governing body has a strong skill set and governors are utilising their skills well. They remain few in number and are actively seeking to appoint new governors who can extend their expertise further.

Middle leaders are developing their confidence and skill in leading their subjects effectively. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what they need to do to support and improve further. Their role in monitoring the school's work is in its earliest stages and needs to be strengthened to enable them to play a full role in whole-school improvement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. It is strongest in upper key stage 2 and in the early years. The changes to staffing following the inspection in September 2016 are now settling down. The staff team are clear about the executive headteacher's high expectations of all aspects of the school's work and they are positive about the support they have received to become better practitioners. Staff have 'bought into' the challenges that lie ahead and see the purposeful and ambitious journey the school is now travelling.

New approaches to assessment and frequent checking of pupils' progress are helping teachers identify any pupils who are underperforming. Timetabling changes, introduced by the executive headteacher, devote a daily session for teachers to work with individual pupils to address any pupil misconceptions and ensure they are ready for learning the following day. This is beginning to address the historic underachievement that is evident in pupils' outcomes.

Since the inspection, the executive headteacher has introduced a daily shared-reading session. In these sessions comprehension skills are explicitly taught using increasingly challenging texts. Pupils are showing growing confidence in tackling a range of comprehension questions. This is borne out by improving progress rates in reading. However, more needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching of phonics for pupils in key stage 1.

A new approach to the teaching of mathematics has been introduced to address the shortcomings identified at inspection. An extensive training package was provided to improve teachers' subject knowledge and help them make the required changes to their practice; now pupils are given daily opportunities to practise their reasoning and problem solving skills. This is commonplace across the school.

A new policy for marking and feedback is supporting pupils' growing awareness of their own successes and the things they need to do to improve. It is particularly well used in upper key stage 2 classes where pupils respond appropriately to the feedback given to them by their teacher.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders immediately addressed the concerns around pupils' safety and welfare. Detailed logs are now maintained that clearly show the actions taken by leaders to address concerns raised. This is carefully monitored by the executive headteacher, whose record-keeping is meticulous. There is now a standing agenda item for each staff meeting relating to health and safety and frequent reminders are given to staff of the important role they play in keeping children safe.

The ambition to deliver a high level of support for pupils' personal development comes through strongly. A range of strategies are in place to engage pupils in their learning, which include the services of a play therapist.

Pupils are content in their school and talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe. They have noticed the introduction of walkie-talkies for staff on duty and the increased number of fire evacuation practices they now have. They know how to keep themselves safe on the internet and know about the different forms of bullying. Pupils feel strongly that there is an adult in school who can help them if they have a problem. Parents endorse this view.

There has been a clear focus upon improving the attendance of pupils and the

executive headteacher has established procedures to monitor pupils' attendance robustly. There are signs of improvement in the reduction of the number of pupils with poor attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes at key stage 1 remain weak and are below the national average. The progress pupils in Year 6 make from their starting points in Year 3 has been variable over time. In 2016, rates of progress were not good enough for pupils by the end of key stage 2. The executive headteacher has worked tirelessly to strengthen outcomes for all pupils, particular disadvantaged pupils, and makes regular checks of assessment information, learning and pupils' books to ensure that no pupil is falling behind.

Teaching in upper key stage 2 is now ensuring that pupils are catching up rapidly and the work seen in books for pupils currently in Years 4, 5 and 6 is showing signs of strong progress in all subjects.

Leaders are clear that raising outcomes for pupils is their core function. They have set challenging targets for pupils in all years groups to ensure that historic underachievement is caught up. Outcomes in reading are strengthening across key stage 2. This again is as a result of the changes made by the executive headteacher. Nevertheless pupils' outcomes in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have declined over several years and so more still needs to be done to improve these results in the future. The executive headteacher has plans in place to achieve this.

Pupils' arithmetic skills are secure. As a result of changes made this academic year, their skills of reasoning and problem-solving are improving, particularly in upper key stage 2. Outcomes for the most-able pupils and disadvantaged most-able pupils are variable, particularly at key stage 1 where few pupils are working at the higher standards. Outcomes are much stronger in upper key stage 2 where pupils are routinely given challenging activities that make them think hard about their learning. This is not yet consistent in all classes.

Work in the early years shows that children's progress has begun to accelerate. The new early years leader has secured an accurate assessment of children's achievement and parental involvement. Positive and careful modelling of expected behaviour ensures that children demonstrate positive behaviour for sharing and negotiation. Leaders have worked hard on developing activities that emerge from children's interests and this is impacting positively upon children's outcomes overall. However, few children are able to make the faster progress needed to exceed the standard expected of them. Although improvements have been made to the environment, there is still more to do to ensure the outdoor provision is of a similar standard to that indoors.

External support

The trust and executive headteacher have secured a good range of effective support from several local schools and clusters of schools. Subject leaders now attend network meetings to ensure their practice is continually being reviewed and refined. There has been considerable external support to moderate the standards of work in the Reception class, Year 2 and Year 6. Staff welcome the shared training opportunities that are now provided, particularly those relating to safeguarding. Strong relationships exist between staff in this school and staff from the executive headteacher's other school. This has helped staff at St Nicholas become much more outward facing and keen to learn from successful practice in other schools.