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Gary Futcher
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Dear Mr Futcher

Special measures monitoring inspection of All Saints Church of England Academy

Following my visit with Bill Houldsworth and Janet Mee, Ofsted Inspectors, to your academy on 20–21 September 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 academy'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 February 2017.

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 academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose, but requires revision.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017.

- Urgently improve leadership and management at all levels, including the sixth form, by:
 - strengthening the governing body so that leaders are held fully to account for improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that leaders and governors accurately evaluate all aspects of the school's work and use this evaluation to develop and implement effective planning for improvement
 - developing the skills of senior and middle leaders in improving the quality and impact of teaching to raise standards, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
 - making sure that attendance initiatives are embedded and rates of pupil absence fall.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils significantly improve across the curriculum, including in the sixth form, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that the standards of work and pupils' rates of progress over time are at least good
 - providing pupils with appropriately challenging work, especially for the most able pupils
 - making sure pupils complete and present their work to a high standard
 - improving pupils' literacy skills, particularly use of accurate spelling
 - consistently promoting pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' work are accurate and consistent
 - significantly improving outcomes for those studying level 2 courses in English and/or mathematics in the sixth form.

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

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

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other leaders. Discussions were also held with governors, with a trustee and with representatives from two of the school's external partners. Meetings were held with other staff and with groups of pupils, both formally and informally. Inspectors visited lessons and examined a range of pupils' work in order to assess the progress they are making, along with the quality of curriculum and the impact of assessment. An inspector also visited the 'ready to learn centre' and examined the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding.

Context

Following the last inspection, the previous chair of the governing body resigned. Four new governors have been recruited and a new chair of governors appointed. A large staff restructuring and voluntary redundancy programme was completed during the summer term. By the beginning of the current academic year, 29 members of staff had left the school and 17 new members of staff had joined. There have been several changes to the senior leadership team, including the appointment of an interim deputy headteacher. The school is participating in the 'Teach First' programme, with recruitment to English and science. Discussions are currently under way to consider re-brokering the school to a new sponsor.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have secured substantial improvements to pupils' behaviour throughout the school. They rightly recognise this to be an essential step on which to base further improvement in other areas of the school's work. There have also been significant and important improvements to the quality of governance. Leaders and the trust have also secured substantial external support for the school, which has been influential in tackling behaviour and in making inroads into improving the quality of assessment and the curriculum.

Following the last inspection, a substantial restructuring of staffing and leadership has been successfully completed. This has enabled leaders and governors to put in place a streamlined and more efficient staffing and leadership structure. However, given the scale of the changes to staffing across the school, this has also contributed to some slowing of the pace of improvements to teaching and to the curriculum. Nevertheless, suitable line management arrangements are now in place which make clear the responsibilities for improvement. However, leaders rightly recognise the need to drive improvements more systematically and rigorously, with greater accountability through time-limited actions and targets. The school improvement plan, which covers the key aspects arising from the last inspection, is also in need of revision to take account of the school's most pressing priorities.

Leaders have very successfully driven improvements to pupils' behaviour through the introduction of an approach known as 'ready to learn'. Leaders looked at behaviour strategies across a range of other schools before designing and implementing their own approach. The impact of 'ready to learn' has been significant in a short space of time and leaders have secured a good level of consistency across the school. These improvements have been made despite adverse local and national press coverage and some parental concerns, against which leaders held steadfast in their determination to tackle behaviour. Staff say that they feel more supported and valued, and that the school is a calmer and more purposeful place. Steady progress is also being made to improve pupils' attendance, particularly for students in the sixth form.

Leaders and governors are very open and reflective about the scale of the challenges facing the school. Although there was a period of some denial and soul-searching following the last inspection, this has now been replaced by strong resolve and a determination to drive improvement. Leaders and governors rightly recognise the importance of improving the skills and capacity of leaders at all levels to secure improvements to teaching and the curriculum. They acknowledge that weak and inconsistent teaching across the school remains a key barrier to tackling underachievement.

Similarly, the curriculum in some subject areas does not challenge pupils enough or deepen their learning. Leaders have begun to tackle a poorly designed key stage 4 curriculum based solely on GCSE programmes. This has been reviewed and a more appropriate range of courses is being introduced. In addition, leaders have implemented a new and ambitious programme into Years 7 and 8 intended to improve pupils' literacy and oracy skills (known as 'secondary ready'). However, the potential success of this initiative has been undermined by weak planning and ineffective quality assurance. Leaders are taking urgent action to remedy these weaknesses.

At the time of the last inspection, governance was ineffective. Since then, governors and the trust have taken decisive and effective action. A series of new appointments to the governing body have strengthened the range of experience and expertise. Fully accepting of past weaknesses, governors have responded rapidly to the findings of an external review and to an audit of governors' skills. They have developed an effective action plan which is monitored and evaluated regularly. Governors have benefited from external support and scrutiny, and have established a more professional and well-informed approach, underpinned by an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are working closely with senior leaders in particular to provide effective support and challenge for school improvement.

Leaders and governors recognise that the current school improvement plan requires further refinement. In particular, a rigorous and systematic approach to quality assurance is not yet fully in place, and is not integrated into different strands of the school improvement plan. Although the support received from different external

partners has proved a useful stimulus for school improvement, there is a risk of fragmentation and loss of coherence. Leaders have not yet fully articulated a vision for, or systematic approach to, improving teaching. Similarly, planning for the use of pupil premium remains underdeveloped, although an external review of the use of this funding has been completed. Leaders are looking at examples of effective practice in other settings, but there is not yet enough urgency in driving improvements to provision for disadvantaged pupils, or developing an effective plan for using this funding effectively. Meanwhile, disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to vary considerably across the school. Too often, low expectations and ineffective levels of challenge remain barriers to learning. For example, teachers' questioning does not routinely extend and develop pupils' understanding, or too few pupils have opportunities to contribute in lessons. Work is sometimes set primarily to keep pupils busy or to manage behaviour. Leaders rightly recognise that teaching needs to take advantage of improvements to pupils' behaviour and the 'ready to learn' initiative. The school has received significant external support for assessment and the curriculum but this is yet to translate into sustained improvements in the quality of teaching.

Too little teaching demands enough from pupils, or speeds up their progress. For example, pupils' learning in mathematics is improving, but remains weak. Mathematics teaching makes use of a series of short-term assessments intended to help pupils to identify and tackle their errors and misconceptions. However, this approach is less effective in developing pupils' recall and deeper understanding of mathematical concepts, skills and knowledge. Although a highly structured and systematic approach, it is also leading to a narrowing of the mathematics curriculum, largely reliant on teaching to a series of short-term assessments.

The use of tutor time varies considerably too. Pupils say that these times are sometimes not very purposeful or well directed. Although the reorganisation of year groups has improved the organisation of pastoral and academic care, there is not yet an effective programme for the use of tutor time throughout the school.

Not all sixth-form students develop effective study skills, including note-taking and personal organisation. These habits and expectations are not routinely reinforced by teachers or tutors. While some of the most able students develop these skills themselves, many other students are much less well prepared and receive little specific support. There is too little oversight of students' work and folders to set expectations or teach good study skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved significantly. This is a direct result of the 'ready to learn' approach. This has raised expectations and

ensured greater consistency in the management of pupils' behaviour. The positive views of pupils, parents and staff reflect this improvement. All the pupils who spoke to inspectors commented on how their lessons are now rarely disturbed by the behaviour of other pupils. Pupils wear their uniforms with greater pride, and the school site is clean, tidy and largely litter-free. While there have been important gains in pupils' attitudes to learning and to school, leaders rightly recognise the need to be vigilant and insistent in sustaining these improvements.

An important part of the behaviour strategy has been the establishment of the 'ready to learn centre'. Pupils whose behaviour or attitudes do not meet expectations are referred to this centre by staff. Initially, implementing new behaviour expectations led to large numbers of pupils being referred to this facility. More recently, as these expectations have become established, the numbers of referrals has fallen, and the proportion of pupils referred more than once has also declined. Leaders check any patterns in the incidence of referrals, so support can be provided for staff and pupils in managing behaviour. The 'ready to learn' approach also includes an emphasis on conflict resolution and building positive relationships. Protocols are in place to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not referred for reasons linked to unmet learning needs. Leaders recognise that a key next step is to ensure that lessons are more engaging and challenging so that instances of poor behaviour reduce further.

Largely as a consequence of the 'ready to learn' initiative, there has been an overall increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions from school. There have been 32 exclusions since the beginning of September, with many of these a result of refusal to conform to expectations in the 'ready to learn centre'. Encouragingly, there are signs that exclusions are reducing as expectations are becoming established. Nevertheless, a very small number of pupils are struggling to meet the school's expectations. Leaders are working hard to develop a more appropriate curriculum to meet these pupils' needs, which includes working with providers of alternative provision to develop programmes that are more suitable.

Since the inspection, attendance has also improved, although overall gains in Years 7 to 11 are modest and persistent absence remains above the national average. Although the school's approach to encouraging and rewarding attendance is more effective than in the past, the raising of expectations through the 'ready to learn' approach has, in a few cases, discouraged pupils from attending more regularly. In the sixth form, new leaders have had a marked impact on students' attendance, which has risen significantly since the last inspection. This is due to clearer expectations and to better systems to check and promote students' attendance.

The school's approach to safeguarding pupils remains effective and retains a high profile across the school community. Any incidents and referrals are rigorously and promptly followed up, including through liaison with a range of external agencies. Pupils are clear about sharing any concerns they may have and those who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils are confident that any

bullying or discrimination will be taken seriously. The new 'zoning' of different areas, along with better supervision by staff at social times and around the school site, has also contributed to this.

Outcomes for pupils

Provisional examination results for 2017 and evaluations of pupils' learning during the inspection confirm that outcomes remain inadequate. Achievement remains weak in English and in mathematics, and particularly so for disadvantaged pupils across the curriculum. A considerable legacy of underachievement remains, and teaching is not yet consistently strong enough to eradicate this. In the sixth form, examination results in 2017 show that students on vocational courses did better than those who completed academic courses, who underachieved.

The extent to which pupils are effective learners varies considerably across the school. Although behaviour is much improved, pupils' lack of engagement and involvement in some lessons holds back their learning. Too much teaching does not challenge pupils enough and does not take advantage of pupils' better behaviour to speed up progress. Pupils' pride in, and presentation of, their work varies considerably by subject and by teacher. Expectations are not yet being reinforced consistently enough. This also applies to the school's recently introduced marking and feedback policy. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities could not describe how they were helped to make better progress or to close any gaps in their learning.

Similarly, the new 'secondary ready' programme in Years 7 and 8 does not provide sufficient challenge or rigour. The curriculum for this programme lacks clear aims and objectives, so teachers do not understand how pupils' literacy and oracy skills should be developed. As a result, work is too often undemanding and at a level more suited to primary-age pupils. Urgent action is now under way to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum for this programme.

External support

Following the last inspection, the trust and other partners moved quickly to secure external support for the school. Coordinated by the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance (TSA), support has also been received from The Ted Wragg Trust and the Dartmoor TSA. This has been effective in supporting improvement, particularly to pupils' behaviour, the use of assessment information, curriculum development and for leadership. Leaders and governors accept that the school has not historically looked far enough from its own boundaries and has been too slow to learn from other schools or to develop a secure understanding of good-quality provision. Leaders and governors rightly recognise that improvement planning must ensure a close link between key priorities and the commissioning of external support to meet these improvement needs.