

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 March 2018

Mrs Sharon Mullins
Executive Headteacher
Wheatley Church of England Primary School
Littleworth Road
Wheatley
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX33 1NN

Dear Mrs Mullins

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wheatley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Clare Beswick, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 February 2018, 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 February 2017. 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'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 interim academy committee (IAC), the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the chief executive officer of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted

website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Take urgent action to remedy weaknesses in safeguarding procedures and actively promote pupils' welfare, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all safeguarding procedures follow the current guidance issued by the Secretary of State and meet statutory requirements
 - the safeguarding policy is kept up to date and shared with staff and parents
 - risk assessments are completed appropriately, kept up to date and implemented effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all systems for monitoring the work of the school are robust and leaders and managers are held to account for the progress of all groups of pupils
 - school self-evaluation is accurate and informs school improvement planning more effectively
 - school improvement planning is sharply focused on the impact leaders' actions have on improving outcomes for pupils
 - the progress of all groups of pupils is measured accurately by school leaders
 - middle leaders' skills are developed effectively to enable them to have a greater impact on improvements in teaching, learning and assessment
 - the school's curriculum is further developed to engage and excite pupils in a wide range of learning across all subjects
 - all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and thoroughly checked
 - the school's website meets statutory requirements
 - governors take a full and effective role in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
- Improve the personal development and welfare of pupils, by:
 - keeping accurate logs of all behaviour and bullying incidents
 - analysing patterns of behaviour in order to enable effective action to be taken to improve it.
- Improve provision and the quality of learning for children in the early years foundation stage, by:
 - providing a range of experiences that challenge and extend children's learning, including for the most able
 - making sure that all adults extend children's learning and develop their

understanding.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in order to raise standards and ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress, by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can do and the progress they can make
 - providing effective support for all groups of pupils to enable them to make at least good progress from their starting points
 - challenging the most able pupils to enable them to make rapid progress, gain a deeper level of understanding and reach high standards
 - increasing teachers' understanding of assessment and the progression of knowledge and skills in each subject
 - making sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are accurate
 - using assessment information to adjust plans and learning in lessons to provide sufficient challenge to all groups of pupils.

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

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 February 2018

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection, 13 lessons or part lessons were observed, including some jointly with you. Inspectors met with you and other staff with significant responsibilities including the early years leader. Inspectors also met with a variety of personnel from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST) including the chief executive officer, the director of schools and the chair of trustees. I also spoke with three members of the IAC, who act as the school's governing body, including the chair, and one member who also acts as a representative of the Diocese of Oxford. One inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors met with several groups of pupils, including 11 pupils who belong to the school council. Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, records relating to safeguarding and advisers' notes of visits. The single central record was checked.

Context

At the end of December 2017, the headteacher resigned and left. From 1 January 2018, ODST moved you from your role as their principal schools' adviser to act as the executive headteacher for four days per week, on an interim basis until 31 July 2018. At this time, the deputy headteacher, who had stepped up to acting headteacher for much of the autumn term, reverted back to her original role, resuming some class teaching responsibility. The multi-academy trust is currently in the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher for September 2018. From 1 January 2018, some existing support was adapted in order to provide additional leadership expertise, including that of a headteacher from a local outstanding school. At the beginning of this term you were absent for a period of approximately two weeks.

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) had resigned. The SENCo has now retracted her resignation and has extended her hours, working for four days per week. Also, from February 2018, the school's designated safeguarding lead role was allocated to the SENCo who had previously acted as one of the school's deputy designated leads for safeguarding. Support staff roles have also been evaluated and there have been some changes to teaching assistants' roles and hours.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following my last visit, the multi-academy trust acted swiftly to put in place more secure leadership arrangements, appointing you as interim executive headteacher in January 2018. You have brought a revitalised sense of purpose to the work of the school. You are highly skilled at instilling confidence in others and, as a result, you are beginning to get the best out of those that work alongside you. You are

insistent that all of the school's leaders meet more regularly than in the past. Parents, pupils and staff talk positively about the impact you are having in setting a forward momentum by taking decisive action and meeting a variety of challenges head-on. Staff are appreciative of the judicious steer that you provide and are eager to live up to your aspirations, describing you as the much-needed 'driver' of improvement. Since your arrival, the expectations of all stakeholders have risen and you are beginning to deliver demonstrable improvements.

You have constructed an insightful and well-considered action plan that underpins your work. Actions are appropriate and staggered sensibly over the year. The plan has been shared widely and all are now clear on the course forward. The plan includes helpful and measurable milestones that will aid others in evaluating the impact of leaders' actions on school improvement. Middle leaders are able to describe how their work complements the key actions described in the school's improvement plan. Staff and other leaders are now much clearer about what the school is trying to achieve, and by when. Nevertheless, you know that greater urgency is required as some time was lost following the ineffective progress judgement at the first monitoring inspection.

Alongside the progress made since my last visit, however, serious challenges remain. Senior leaders have yet to act with enough urgency to:

- monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school
- hold staff to account for pupils' progress and attainment
- evaluate the school's performance sharply
- accelerate the progress of key groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, notably disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able pupils.

Due to your unavoidable absence for some of this term, the intended monitoring cycle of teaching and learning has yet to get underway. As a result, the management of teachers' performance is at a very early stage. The IAC has helpfully established performance targets for teachers. However, despite agreeing this starting point, teachers do not yet receive timely feedback from senior leaders on how to improve their skills and expertise. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is not improving quickly or strongly enough. Many pupils are falling further behind as the quality of teaching continues to drift, with too little securely good enough. All leaders, governors, trustees and representatives vented their frustration to inspectors regarding the school's slow progress in this regard. They are all too aware that the quality of teaching still requires significant improvement if pupils are to realise their full potential.

Middle leaders have become more involved with school improvement work. They are committed to playing their part increasingly effectively and have developed a much greater awareness of what is required. With the support of external advisers, middle leaders have begun to construct suitable action plans for their subjects.

However, middle leaders' work to monitor standards is at a very early stage, as they are still getting to grips with their understanding of the school's assessment information. Leaders have yet to fully evaluate the school's key strengths and weaknesses to aid their work.

Members of the IAC, the school's governors, continue to take their responsibilities seriously and are playing a critical role in moving the school forward. They are not content to simply act as bystanders, preferring to instigate improvement that fully supports your work. The chair is all too aware that some of the IAC's work is required at this stage in order to simply 'bridge gaps.'

Governors have led several key aspects of improvement work. First, governors have introduced improvements to the school's website. Information is now regularly updated and there is a greater breadth of content, such as the recent addition of governors' biographies. Second, governors have helpfully reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and ensured that it is posted on the school's website. Because of their tenacious approach, parents are now in receipt of more useful and up-to-date information. Third, governors have wisely aligned their roles and responsibilities against the school's key improvement priorities. For example, a parent-link governor is now in place and acting as a reassuring conduit between parents and senior leaders. Parents remain overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are pleased with the direction you and your governors are now setting and believe this is making a difference. They particularly note that communication is strengthening between home and school. Governors fully understand the urgency and scale of improvement required and are providing a steadying hand and a positive influence.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

You recognise that the quality of teaching and learning is not improving quickly enough. You know that pupils have not started to catch up from low starting points to achieve what they are capable of. In order to begin to address key issues, you have helpfully introduced a set of non-negotiables to ensure that your expectations are met more consistently. As a result, some aspects, such as learning displays and the inclusion of reading corners in every classroom, are beginning to support pupils' learning more strongly.

Teachers do not yet make sufficient use of the school's growing bank of assessment information. You have begun to address this aspect by facilitating helpful conversations with staff about pupils' prior attainment. Additionally, a local headteacher from an outstanding school has begun to review pupils' progress more closely alongside staff. Although this work is at an early stage, teachers are now beginning to gain a greater sense of what is required. In addition, you have helpfully revisited the school's approach to marking pupils' work. There is now greater consistency and, in line with the school's policy, pupils are receiving more frequent opportunities and guidance to begin to improve their efforts.

The key skills and competencies referred to in the teachers' standards remain underdeveloped. During planned activities, teachers do not question pupils about their understanding with sufficient intent. In some classes, teachers make superficial checks. There is too much focus on ensuring that pupils are completing work, rather than checking on their progress and understanding during lessons. In some lessons, teachers do not tackle pupils' misconceptions. Pupils' mistakes and misunderstanding are accepted too readily.

Teachers' planning lacks precision and a secure grasp of the expected standard within different age groups. Tasks are not adapted well enough and offer too little appeal to meet the differing needs or capabilities of pupils. For example, sometimes pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not given the support they need to succeed. Equally, tasks are not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. When this is the case, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders are aware that more support is required to help teachers develop these skills so that all pupils have purposeful activities that provide an appropriate level of challenge.

Some teaching assistants have received additional training in a range of bespoke interventions. Teaching assistants are beginning to identify specific aspects of learning where pupils require greater support, such as reading. It is too soon to see the difference such interventions are making. Disadvantaged pupils are yet to benefit from this work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Testament to your can-do attitude is the work you have completed on revitalising the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour. In January, you introduced a policy to staff that establishes clear expectations. You have set out your stall clearly, describing the school's approach to rewards and sanctions. As a result, staff now have a greater awareness of what is expected, and pupils understand the 'Wheatley golden rules'. This work is making a difference and pupils believe that behaviour around the school is continuing to improve. You have continued to log any incidents of poor behaviour. However, leaders' analysis of incidents is as at an early stage as you are in the process of moving towards a new electronic system.

Action to strengthen the school's safeguarding procedures is still a work in progress. Since my last visit, you have reallocated key roles and responsibilities. The school's new designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and, together with the support of the family worker, is overhauling the school's systems effectively. Key staff are successfully catching up with what is described as 'a backlog of referrals'. To aid this work, leaders have established helpful 'at risk children' (ARC) meetings to discuss pupils' needs in greater depth and ensure that they prioritise appropriately. As a result, there is a more joined-up approach, as leaders make greater use of a growing range of sources of information, such as records of pupils' patterns of behaviour and attendance. Leaders are in the initial stages of forging stronger

relationships with external agencies, such as Oxfordshire Hospital Schools. The school's designated safeguarding leads are giving careful consideration to a number of potential partnerships that may well improve the menu of support available to families.

All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. However, the school's safeguarding induction programme, designed to ensure that new staff, including temporary employees, are fully versed in the school's safeguarding procedures, lacks sufficient depth. Leaders are aware that this is an area that needs a stronger and more thorough focus. The ODSST has worked intelligently to ensure that the school now has a full suite of health and safety policies in place. However, staff, including the school's designated safeguarding leads, have yet to have oversight of some of the updated policies, including those relating to safeguarding. Although staff who spoke to inspectors demonstrated sufficient understanding of what to do if a concern arises, it is clear that their working knowledge of all aspects of the school's policy is underdeveloped.

Pupils' attendance has continued to decline and remains just below that seen nationally. Absence is too high, particularly for vulnerable groups including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders are yet to tackle some pupils' regular absence with any real success.

Parents are appreciative of the greater presence of staff at the beginning and end of the school day. They appreciate your presence, too, describing you as 'credible'. You are quickly gaining the trust and support of parents as they feel they can talk openly to you about any matters of concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils are underachieving. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too slow. As a result, standards are not rising and too few pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age. Since my last visit, pupils' progress has not accelerated and some pupils are falling further behind.

Disadvantaged pupils are underachieving in all subjects. Although there is a plan in place, it is unclear what difference this is making. Recently, leaders have taken stock of the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants. There is now a clearer strategy as to who is supporting each year group and when. However, in some cases, teaching assistants are still getting to know the pupils they are working with. Teaching assistants' skills are underdeveloped and, as a result, not all are contributing to accelerating pupils' learning as well as they might.

In writing, from low starting points, you have rightly insisted that pupils' grammatical and compositional skills are prioritised. Pupils now write for a range of different purposes, concentrating their efforts in a more sustained manner. Although pupils' writing stamina is beginning to improve, standards remain too low.

Staff have recently received helpful training. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this on accelerating pupils' progress.

The early years learning environment has improved considerably. ODST has acted swiftly and invested significantly, resurfacing the outdoor area to a high standard. During the inspection, it was clear to see the enthusiasm of children for this 'new' learning area. Children engaged well in play and learning tasks, relishing the opportunity to learn in a safe and appealing space. This aspect is much improved.

External support

You are wholly committed to improving the school and are beginning to orchestrate more precisely the support provided by a variety of external consultants, ensuring that this complements improvement priorities. For example, a headteacher from an outstanding school, under your guidance, is beginning some crucial and helpful work to develop teachers' knowledge of assessment information. Other advisers are training middle leaders, supporting them well to develop their leadership skills. A mathematics consultant has helpfully worked alongside teachers, supporting them with planning appropriate tasks that better meet the needs of pupils.

Significant financial investment from ODST is beginning to make a difference, for example the development of the early years outdoor area. Other work, such as improving the boys' toilets is underway and is providing much needed improvement to the fabric of the building. The multi-academy trust has strengthened leadership arrangements considerably. However, ODST now needs to ensure that systems to monitor the performance of staff and all leaders are implemented fully, so that it is able to hold all staff to account more strongly.