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23 March 2018

Mrs Pauline Ward  
Executive headteacher  
Southminster Church of England Primary School  
Burnham Road  
Southminster  
Essex  
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Dear Mrs Ward

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Southminster Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in October 2016. 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 actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Chelmsford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- As a matter of urgency, make safeguarding fully effective by ensuring that:
  - the school's single central record of employment checks meets statutory requirements
  - recruitment processes are sufficiently robust and statutory guidance around the safer recruitment of staff is followed closely.
- Improve the quality of teaching, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of how pupils should behave and what they can achieve
  - sharing the good practice that is starting to develop in some parts of the school
  - ensuring that teachers plan learning and tasks that match pupils' abilities closely
  - improving the accuracy of assessment so that it becomes a key tool for planning pupils' next steps and for tracking their progress.
- Improve outcomes so that pupils make good progress throughout the school and attain at least in line with national levels by the end of key stage 2 by ensuring that:
  - the pupil premium grant is spent effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress
  - the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are sufficiently stretched and challenged
  - the progress that all pupils make is tracked regularly and prompt action is taken when pupils fail to make the progress they should.
- Improve behaviour throughout the school so that lessons are very rarely disrupted and pupils behave well during less structured parts of the day, by:
  - raising expectations of how pupils should behave
  - devising an effective behaviour management system that is employed effectively and consistently throughout the school.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 March 2018**

### **Evidence**

I met with you and the head of school, the chair of the executive board, the chief executive officer and a representative of the multi-academy trust (MAT), the assistant headteacher and a subject leader, a group of teachers and a group of pupils. I checked the school's records of recruitment to ensure that statutory requirements are met. Together with you and the head of school, I made two short visits to each class to see pupils learning and to look at their work.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of an assistant headteacher.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the academy**

During the last two terms, improvements have continued apace. The member of the executive board with responsibility for and expertise in safeguarding has continued her effective work. Year 6 pupils told me that they now feel very safe because behaviour has improved so much.

The executive board now has shadow members and is working towards establishing a more sustainable local governing body. Members of the current executive board are effective in bringing their expertise to support and challenge leaders. They are proactive in planning for the future, for both governance and leadership.

The new assistant headteacher has a specific remit to improve the provision for and the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. She is able to account for the way additional funding is spent to support disadvantaged pupils but is reviewing the effectiveness of current actions. Currently, the school is unable to link additional spending on disadvantaged pupils to a positive impact. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved and they are rapidly catching up with other pupils nationally. The school puts this down to a combination of greatly improved teaching and the effective use of information about pupils' progress which is used by leaders to challenge teachers.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The school's assessment information shows that there have been rapid improvements this year in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there remains some inconsistency in the rates of progress between different ages.
- Leadership has been strengthened by the appointment of an assistant

headteacher. She is improving the provision for disadvantaged pupils.

- Leaders and those responsible for governance have a clear understanding of pupils' attainment and progress through the now well-established information collection systems. Class teachers are clearer about their purpose and are now not just collecting the information but using it in their planning.
- Behaviour has improved markedly. Teachers said this has been especially the case since Christmas. I found that pupils were working hard and happily in each class. Relationships between staff and pupils are professional. Pupils feel that teachers care about them. Year 6 pupils are effusive about the positive changes since the headteacher arrived. As one pupil put it, backed up by seven others, 'It's gone from like zero to a thousand.'
- The curriculum is broad and often engaging. During the inspection, pupils were involved in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science and technology. Links were made between science and learning about how plastic is a danger to the environment.
- Year 6 pupils maintain a well-balanced curriculum. They were particularly enthusiastic about physical education (PE), where the sports and PE additional funding promotes a range of sporting activity. Pupils' physical well-being develops well through practical activities in the forest school (an outdoor space designated for learning through hands-on experiences). Pupils are also highly positive about the music 'every Friday afternoon' and learning Mandarin Chinese which is 'great fun'.
- Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and understand the expectations for pupils of different ages. Pupils said they have 'done more and more learning' and are no longer doing 'the same thing over and over again'. Solid teaching is having a positive impact on pupil progress.
- The transformation in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues. Pupils now have a positive start to their education.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- While behaviour has been transformed, teachers do not always seem to believe it when planning their lessons. Teaching is often worthy but dull because teachers lack the confidence to capitalise on the unexpected or to allow pupils opportunities to pursue their own ideas.
- Attendance has improved but remains below average. Leaders recognise that even more urgent attention to improving attendance is required for behaviour to be securely good.
- The previous monitoring inspection letter noted that 'there is a communication gap between leaders and classroom teachers'. This continues to be the case.

## **External support**

Much of the external support has come from your other school. Staff are increasingly planning together across the two schools. Governance is shared and training for staff alternates across the two schools. Leaders have established partnerships with other local schools. During this inspection I discussed with MAT leaders how other schools in the MAT could be used to provide additional support to improve the quality of teaching further.