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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Rachael Greenhalgh
Executive Headteacher
Middleton Church of England Primary Academy
School Road
Middleton
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE32 1SA

Dear Mrs Greenhalgh

Special measures monitoring inspection of Middleton Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 27 and 28 March 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 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 academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the transition board, the director of education

for the Diocese of Norwich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Swiftly improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - ensuring that all agreed new procedures are implemented consistently by all staff
 - checking frequently that teaching is consistently effective in meeting pupils' needs
 - evaluating rigorously the difference that leaders' actions make to pupils' learning
 - making sure that improvement plans have robust measurements for judging the success of the actions taken
 - reporting and reviewing the success of improvement plans frequently
 - making sure that the use of extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is effective in narrowing the gap in achievement between them and other pupils nationally
 - governors being steadfast and robust in holding leaders to account for pupils' outcomes in all subjects
 - developing positive relationships with parents and increasing their confidence in the school to support children's education.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' achievement across the school so that:
 - teachers have the necessary skills to assess pupils' outcomes accurately
 - all adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - work matches the needs and abilities of the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - pupils understand precisely what is expected of them, and what they need to do to be successful learners
 - learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Implementing a high-quality curriculum so that pupils are prepared well for the next stages in their education by:
 - making sure that all pupils have equality of provision
 - making sure that there is sufficient time to teach all subjects of the curriculum.
- Urgently improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:

- establishing a strong culture of safeguarding pupils
- eradicating disruptive behaviour in the classroom and around the school
- ensuring that all staff use the school's agreed behaviour management strategies
- ensuring that assessment of pupils' personal development is thorough
- securing appropriate intervention and the help of external agencies
- nurturing positive, aspirational behaviours for learning so that pupils want to do their best and, consequently, achieve well.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 27 March 2018 to 28 March 2018

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you and the head of school, leaders of English, mathematics and the early years, a group of pupils, a representative of the transition board and two representatives of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT). I spoke informally with parents and carers at the school gates, and with pupils at break and lunchtimes.

Context

Since October 2017, you have led the school in your role as executive headteacher. The proposed federation with your other school, Gayton Primary, has been postponed until it converts to an academy and joins with the DNEAT later this year. Since the last monitoring inspection, the number of pupils on roll has fallen, leading to a reduction from four to three classes. A new teacher has joined the school to lead the Reception and key stage 1 class. A teacher who joined in September 2017 has left the school. Her duties have been covered by another teacher on a temporary basis.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You have wasted no time in settling into your new role, and are providing staff with clear, coherent leadership. Staff, pupils and parents commented favourably on the impact you have already had since your arrival. There is growing confidence in the school, as parents and the local community know that things are improving, and the school is becoming a safe and stimulating environment in which to learn.

Improvement plans are suitably prioritised. They contain clear milestones to measuring the progress made in securing improvements. You use these plans to maintain a running record of the success of your actions to improve the school and to identify aspects that needs further attention.

Procedures for managing behaviour and for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have been strengthened. Your termly reports to the transition board provide a detailed review of the impact of actions to tackle the areas for improvement raised at the last inspection. You combine this effectively with a summary overview of the school's effectiveness, based on your own monitoring, analysis of assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work. You also report fully on the impact that additional funding is having on improving the behaviour and attendance, and on raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Training for other leaders is adding further capacity to make further improvements.

Your head of school has benefited from additional training to develop his leadership. He is demonstrating a clearer understanding of his role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision, and in leading improvements to teaching and learning in mathematics. The leadership of English is less well developed. Good-quality improvement plans and the detailed evaluation of their impact, as seen in mathematics, are not yet replicated in English. You acknowledge that more needs to be done to develop further capacity to lead improvements in this area.

Your new teacher of the joint Reception and Years 1 and 2 class has established herself quickly. She has rightly prioritised her teaching, making sure that it meets the needs of all pupils of different ages and abilities. She has audited the quality of the learning environment and is beginning to lead improvements to the early years setting.

Less progress has been made in implementing a high-quality curriculum. You have rightly focused on tackling the legacy of pupils' underachievement in English and mathematics in key stage 2. Our joint scrutiny of pupils' books confirmed that a range of other subjects are provided but are taught in much less detail. Significant scope exists to develop pupils' learning further in science and a range of foundation subjects.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

You have built on the improvements to teaching and learning noted at the time of the last inspection. Training for teachers and classroom assistants has broadened their use of a range of teaching skills and new resources. Teachers use interactive whiteboards with confidence. Behaviour is usually managed effectively.

Marking of pupils' work, in line with the school's agreed procedures, is becoming more consistent and is evident in most pupils' books. Pupils are encouraged to consider the feedback provided by staff and take action to comment on and improve their work. Books show that, when marking, staff do not always take the opportunity to reinforce their expectations of presentation, or challenge pupils to correct basic spelling and grammatical errors in their work.

Assessment is used more systematically to gauge how well pupils are doing. This is providing teachers and support staff with the information they need to illustrate pupils' progress and inform their planning of learning. However, not all of them are using this information regularly to plan learning that is suitably challenging for pupils. Too often, pupils of different abilities end up doing the same work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Our observations confirmed your view that behaviour is improving. Most pupils behave well and enjoy school. They are respectful and conduct themselves well at breaks and lunchtimes. Many of them respond well to the sports coaches employed to provide enrichment activities, and participation rates are high. Behaviour is managed more consistently by all staff, in line with the school's agreed procedures. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and 'make the right choices'.

Teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils well and forge positive relations with them. They show endless patience and understanding when dealing with a small minority of pupils who regularly display very challenging behaviour. At times, this poor behaviour absorbs too much staff time, which impedes the learning and progress of others.

Attendance is rising. Currently, it is much closer to the national average and the school's own target for this year. You have identified a small minority of pupils who are persistently absent from school and taken action to work with families and external agencies to improve this. Your records show that this is leading to improvement, and absence rates are falling.

You have used your knowledge and experience to establish systematic procedures for safeguarding pupils. The strong culture of safeguarding noted at the time of the last monitoring inspection remains evident. When I asked pupils whether they feel safe in school, they said 'Yes', but they want staff to do more to eradicate some unpleasant name-calling and pushing and shoving on the playground.

Outcomes for pupils

Staff training and routine monitoring are leading to improved consistency in teaching, learning and the use of assessment. The impact of this on pupils' learning and progress is clearly evident. Pupils' overall attainment remains low, but work in their books and your own assessment information indicates that most of them are now making better progress than in the past.

Our observations confirmed that most pupils have re-engaged in learning and are making improved progress. Your latest assessment information shows that, in key stage 1, pupils are making good progress in their reading and writing, but slower progress in mathematics. In key stage 2, most pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils in Year 6, most of whom are disadvantaged, need more help to improve their reading and mathematics and their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

We noted during our joint observations that tasks set for the most able pupils were too easy for them, particularly in mathematics. Staff are not checking often enough that these pupils are fully stretched, or that the least able, including those who have

SEN and/or disabilities understand fully what they need to do. Progress made in some foundation subjects remains unclear because pupils' books show only a limited amount of work completed.

External support

The academy trust continues to provide the school with effective support and challenge. A clear, coherent statement of action and plans for improvement are firmly in place. This enables the trust to monitor at regular intervals the rate of improvement made. An executive principal from the trust provides you with regular support and challenge and holds you and your staff accountable for making improvements.

The trust has established a transition board to oversee the school's improvement. It meets regularly to evaluate the school's work and gauge the rate of improvements being made. It also considers information gained from additional external reviews commissioned by the trust and reviews by staff from another academy trust and a local teaching school, to monitor improvements made.

The first monitoring inspection identified some next steps to take to aid improvement. Leaders, and those responsible for governance, were asked to ensure that leaders maintained their focus on improving teaching and learning and assessed the impact of this on accelerating the progress made by pupils. This has been achieved. They were also asked to ensure that teachers raised their expectations of pupils and set suitably challenging work for them. This remains an area for development for the school.