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Miss Gillian Wilson
Head of School
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Cross Lane
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Bradford
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Dear Miss Wilson

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Oswald's Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit with Simon Bissett, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20–21 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 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 school may seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for

Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Swiftly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least consistently good across all subjects by:
 - increasing expectations of what pupils can do so they are consistently high
 - setting work that matches the needs and abilities of pupils and challenges them appropriately
 - making sure that pupils of all abilities present their work neatly and take pride in their work
 - skilfully questioning pupils to probe and deepen their understanding
 - assessing pupils' learning to adjust work appropriately if they are not making good progress.
- Rapidly improve outcomes for all groups of pupils to make sure that they are at least good by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress so that attainment is at least average in reading, writing and mathematics
 - closing gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
 - deepening pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects, especially science, history, geography and modern foreign languages
 - expecting pupils to write at length in a wide range of subjects to deepen their knowledge
 - strengthening the application of mathematics across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the provision in the early years so that:
 - children can access more reading, writing and number activities in the outdoor area
 - boys are engaged more effectively in learning so that their progress in reading, writing and mathematical skills improves at a faster rate.
- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels by making sure that:
 - teachers' knowledge is strengthened to secure good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and across a wide range of subjects for all groups of pupils
 - teachers are sufficiently skilled to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have their needs met and make

good progress

- subject leaders ensure that the school’s policy on marking is applied and incisive feedback is provided to which pupils respond in detail so they improve their work
- subject leaders check pupils’ work thoroughly to ensure that teachers are assessing pupils’ work accurately in all subjects
- pupils’ attendance is at least average and persistent absenteeism is below average
- pupils’ attitudes to learning are consistently positive with all the adults who teach them
- pupil premium funding is used effectively to strengthen the attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- senior leaders ensure that governors are provided with reliable information to make informed decisions.

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 20 March 2018 to 21 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. They met with the head of school, a range of other leaders, groups of pupils, several parents and carers, the chair of the academy transformation board, the chief executive officer, executive principal and a headteacher consultant.

Context

There have been some changes to the school's staffing since the last monitoring visit. Supply teachers are covering four classes. Two teachers, who have recently returned from maternity leave, are supporting, alongside two of the supply teachers, to provide additional staffing in one year group.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You have continued to improve the school with passion and commitment and have made sure that senior and middle leaders are able to take increasing responsibility for improving outcomes. You have communicated your vision and high expectations clearly to staff, and they are comprehensively involved in evaluating the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. Consequently, staff are on board with the changes being made and understand the part they have to play in improving the school.

Leaders have developed reporting systems further to include a new format for keeping members of the academy transformation board updated on the progress towards meeting the school improvement targets. This supports them in holding school leaders to account with greater rigour. Additionally, more leaders are now contributing to the school's self-evaluation cycle. Subject leadership is also developing well. For example, the English leader has a secure understanding of teachers' strengths and weaknesses. She is involved in regular checks of pupils' books and teaching and uses this to sharply identify next steps for individual staff and whole-school development needs. She produces brief documents which summarise the actions taken and evaluate the impact on pupils' outcomes.

The leader of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has changed the culture of how the needs of these pupils are met. Teachers are now more accountable for the outcomes and provision for this group. Specific intervention groups are often taught by teachers, with the use of specialist expertise to support delivery when needed. The leader checks the impact of provision on pupils' outcomes and carries out in-depth reviews to ensure that teaching is effective in meeting the pupils' needs.

The leader with responsibility for pupil premium spending for disadvantaged pupils is completing termly reviews to check the impact of provision on outcomes for this group. Pupil progress meetings are also used to effectively hold teachers to account for disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. You agree that the plan could be sharpened further by including precise success criteria which relate to outcomes for specific cohorts and subjects. Further analysis of pupils' attainment and progress information would support leaders in identifying where the strategy is having the greatest impact.

Leaders are beginning to analyse the data by paying greater attention to the context of the pupils, for example those who are new to school and/or new to English. Leaders thoroughly understand and interrogate the school's assessment information, but you acknowledge that it could be presented with a brief narrative to explain the context of each cohort. Middle leaders would then be able to analyse the data with a thorough understanding of the context for each cohort. You are also aware that tracking of pupils' attainment is not yet focusing on the proportion of pupils working beyond the expected standard, although there is evidence that this is increasing. You are keen to more routinely track these figures so leaders and teachers remain ambitious about what pupils can achieve.

Training and visits to other schools have raised leaders' expectations of what is possible in the early years. Leaders have transformed Nursery provision with resources and furniture which are more age appropriate. As a result of leaders' actions, there are increased opportunities for children to use and apply their newly acquired skills throughout the school day. Leaders have identified that the outdoor area is the next priority for improvement so that it is used more effectively to maximise children's learning and development.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inspectors observed a much more consistent approach to teaching across the school. This is because leaders are involved in regular checks on the quality of teaching and are providing precise feedback for staff, which is supporting them in improving the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. Additionally, leaders' effective monitoring is highlighting any training needs, either for the whole school or for individuals. This tailored professional development is ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. You are aware that, where there has been some inconsistency in teaching, in one year group in particular, this has hindered development. However, you have taken action and are providing additional staffing, as a temporary measure, in order to ensure that pupils do not fall behind and are continuing to build on their prior knowledge.

Teachers are regularly involved in considering their practice, for example, through weekly training sessions when they scrutinise the work in pupils' books. This has been successful and has resulted in teachers having much higher expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. They have also been able to learn from each

other and consequently are routinely fine-tuning their teaching approaches. You have empowered staff to take responsibility and be more accountable for pupils' outcomes. The approach you have used has been particularly successful, as it has been carried out in a supportive and non-threatening way.

Teachers' subject knowledge has improved so they have a much more secure understanding of how to plan to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils' books show that teachers are planning sequences of learning which build on pupils' prior understanding but also help them to meet the age-related expectations. For example, careful assessment at the start of each English unit of work identifies any gaps in pupils' knowledge, or basic skills which are not yet secure. Through the unit of work, which is pitched at an age-appropriate standard, pupils are given opportunities to develop the skills which have been identified as holding back their learning. However, there are still missed opportunities to remind younger pupils about their use of accurate letter formation and use of phonics for spelling. This is particularly the case for the lower-attaining pupils who have more gaps in their learning.

In lessons, teachers are becoming much more adept in picking up errors and misconceptions. They are then able to provide immediate feedback, which is supporting pupils to make faster gains in their learning.

The teaching of phonics has continued to improve, and teachers have further developed their subject knowledge. Additional intervention groups are supporting pupils who are not on track to meet the Year 1 phonics standard. Teachers deliver these sessions and use the information from assessments to make sure that teaching is precisely tailored to pupils' needs. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and are successful in their learning because teachers base the activities on their prior learning and a firm understanding of the next steps required.

The teaching of subjects beyond English and mathematics is developing well. A team of curriculum leaders is making sure that subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding are identified at the planning stage. Learning journals, which include pupils' work across the curriculum, are supporting teachers in making links between subjects and having much higher expectations of the standard of work produced. For example, having learned about paragraphing in an English lesson, pupils later used their newly acquired skill when writing in science later that day.

In the early years, adults interact well with children. They take every opportunity to model sentences that are correctly constructed, using specific vocabulary to broaden children's language use and develop their understanding across the curriculum. Tasks give children a wide range of experiences and opportunities to practise their spoken language and social interaction, for example, through cookery. Carefully identified next steps, for example, of children's pen grip and letter formation support children's development.

At the last monitoring visit, some teachers were still underestimating what pupils had achieved when they were assessing pupils' attainment. You took prompt action to make sure that leaders were challenging teachers about their assessments of pupils' learning. During the regular pupil progress meetings, leaders and teachers now work together to agree ambitious targets for each pupil. This means that, if pupils are not yet working at the age-related expectation, an agreement is reached about when and how this will be achieved.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders' actions have continued to reduce the frequency and severity of behaviour incidents. This has been achieved through assiduously following the behaviour policy and having an enhanced behaviour programme for those pupils who have more specific needs. Teachers are also becoming increasingly accountable for pupils' behaviour in the classroom. Staff create a nurturing atmosphere, and relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils are polite and well mannered.

The wider curriculum provides opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have recently been involved in formulating new school values, and these are explored through regular assemblies and daily worship. As a result, pupils are able to explain the school's values and can describe how they are encouraged and celebrated. However, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values remains less well developed. Pupils are encouraged to play a full part in school life, for example through the school council and fund-raising activities. As a result, pupils are developing a sense of responsibility and are proud of their school and the opportunities it provides.

The mixed-age tutor groups continue to give pupils from different year groups the opportunity to talk to each other and share their learning experiences. Consequently, pupils are now much more aware of and involved in their learning. They can describe the progress they are making and their next steps for development.

'Eden' is providing valuable support for vulnerable pupils and those who are new to English. Staff work with families and support teachers in how to best assist the pupils when they are in class. Pupils access highly focused support, often on a 1:1 basis, in Eden but are also integrated well when back in class with their peers.

Leaders have been relentless in their determination to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. However, recent events such as an influenza epidemic and inclement weather have affected attendance rates.

Outcomes for pupils

You are acutely aware that pupils' achievement lags behind that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage. Although progress is quickening throughout school, you are eager for this to speed up even further so that pupils' outcomes rise sharply by the end of this school year. As lots of new pupils join the school throughout the year, many of whom are also new to learning English, you acknowledge that this affects the overall standards which pupils in each year group achieve. You have begun to analyse the impact of this more closely, so that you can be really secure about evaluations of pupils' attainment.

In the few instances where the quality of teaching is not as strong, you know that outcomes are more variable. For example, in one year group which has experienced some staffing instability, pupils need to make more rapid progress in order to achieve what they are capable of. You have been quick to take action to redress the balance, and leaders' scrutiny of work in pupils' books is confirming early signs of improvement for these pupils. In most year groups, work in lessons and books confirms that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities, are making better progress as a result of the improved teaching they are receiving.

However, leaders' monitoring and inspectors' review of pupils' learning in lessons and books show that lower-attaining pupils are not always making the gains in learning that their peers make. This is because teaching is not always taking sufficient notice of pupils' basic skills such as accurate letter formation and the use of phonics for spelling.

The actions you have taken to encourage pupils to read widely and often and develop a love of reading are beginning to take hold. Pupils continue to enjoy visiting the library and now have access to a range of high-quality texts in which you have recently invested. However, you are aware that for some pupils, particularly those whose reading is not supported at home, reading is not always seen as a pleasurable experience. This slows down their progress in reading.

When pupils are in the early stages of learning to read, they now have books which are closely matched to their phonics knowledge. This is helping them to develop greater confidence and is increasing the accuracy and fluency in their reading. You are now keen to purchase extra books which match pupils' phonics knowledge, to extend the range of books which they can read to parents and carers at home. Improved teaching of phonics is resulting in better outcomes for pupils this year. The school's assessment of pupils' phonics knowledge is showing that, already, a greater proportion of pupils are working at the expected standard at this point in the year than met the standard by the end of Year 1 in 2017.

Pupils are now invariably accessing work which is pitched at age-related expectations. Consequently, pupils' standards in a range of subjects, beyond English and mathematics, are starting to improve.

Leaders recognise that, despite children making good progress in Reception, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Nursery could be even better. Leaders' actions are starting to help Nursery children to begin Reception with the skills needed to support them to reach a good level of development by the end of the early years.

External support

The multi-academy trust secures appropriate and effective support for school leaders. This is proving instrumental in bringing about improvements at a rapid pace. The executive principal has ensured that you are supported well in your journey of improvement. For example, together you have been able to identify where additional advice and support are needed and have allocated specialist leaders of education to assist leaders and teachers with priorities for improvement. Additionally, support from the diocese, alongside that of a headteacher consultant, has enabled a consistent approach to developing the school's Christian values and the curriculum for religious education.