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19 April 2018

Mrs Vicky Matthews  
Executive Headteacher  
Ulceby St Nicholas Church of England Primary School  
Church Lane  
Ulceby  
Lincolnshire  
DN39 6TB

Dear Mrs Matthews

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Ulceby St Nicholas Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your academy on 27 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 third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in September 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.

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 governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diane Buckle

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Urgently improve safeguarding arrangements by:
  - ironing out any confusion about accountability and putting in place effective arrangements to regularly check procedures and recording
  - thoroughly auditing all aspects of safeguarding policy and practice then taking action to correct any shortcomings
  - ensuring that all staff and governors are trained to a better standard, updating training regularly and checking that all adults fully understand all of their duties.
- Improve leadership and governance by:
  - ensuring that senior and middle leaders carry out more regular and thorough checks on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning
  - strengthening improvement plans, identifying precise targets that can be measured at regular points throughout the school year
  - reviewing arrangements for governance including the scheme of delegation
  - ensuring that governors are properly trained and that they receive more detailed information so they can challenge leaders more effectively.
- Further improve teaching so that pupils' outcomes improve by:
  - bringing all teaching up to the quality of the best in the school
  - making sure that teachers identify the most able pupils and consistently give these pupils challenging work, so more of them reach higher standards
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to routinely attempt really tricky problems in mathematics and to develop their reasoning skills
  - improving pupils' reading comprehension skills.
- Improve provision in the early years by:
  - conducting more rigorous risk assessments
  - more fully involving parents in their child's learning and assessment
  - improving the quality of resources inside and outside and ensuring that children are challenged in their independent play and exploration.

An external review of governance should be undertaken.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 27 March 2018.**

### **Evidence**

I observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, subject leaders, pupils and representatives from the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust (LAAT). A telephone conversation was held with the chair of the governing body.

I looked at pupils' work in books and talked to pupils informally about their learning. Four pupils from key stage 1 were heard to read. I observed learning in parts of lessons alongside the executive headteacher.

Not all of the areas for improvement identified at the last monitoring inspection were considered during this visit. The focus of this inspection was to establish the extent of improvements in teaching in key stage 1, including phonics, and lower key stage 2 and to check whether teaching is leading to better outcomes for pupils. I also wanted to establish the effectiveness of middle leaders in driving through the required improvements in their subjects. The school's safeguarding arrangements were also reviewed.

### **Context**

Ulceby St Nicholas CE is part of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust (LAAT). The trust has successfully secured the posts of executive headteacher and head of school, which will be permanent positions from 1 April 2018. All other teaching staff remain the same as of 1 September 2017. An additional teaching assistant was appointed this term, to provide additional one-to-one support to pupils who require it.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leaders, including governors, have maintained their relentless focus upon improving all aspects of the school's work. The executive headteacher sets the very highest of expectations for rapid improvement and there has been no lull in the pace set for the successful removal of special measures. The head of school, who also maintains the unremitting focus upon securing further improvement, ably supports her. Together, they are securing a positive learning environment. There is a shared confidence among leaders about where they are and what is still left to do. Robust systems are now in place in which everyone plays their part in checking on the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's work.

Following the last monitoring visit, leaders have refined their improvement plans to reflect current priorities more accurately, while at the same time keeping a watchful eye on those improved aspects of practice identified in previous monitoring

inspections. A detailed overview of pupils' achievement from their various starting points supplements leaders' improvement plans. Such detailed tracking of pupils' progress at an individual, group, and whole-class level identifies underachievement swiftly. This allows immediate action to be taken to remedy it.

Leaders are honest in their evaluation of pupils' outcomes. They recognise that there remains a legacy of pupils' underachievement and teachers' inaccurate assessment that they continue to tackle.

Since the last monitoring visit, middle leadership has strengthened further. Careful supervision and extensive support by senior leaders has ensured that middle leaders are developing their skills effectively. Middle leaders have led staff training that is bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching in their subjects. Pupils' work in books reflects marked improvements as a result of leaders' actions. This is particularly the case in science and mathematics. Middle leaders have retained their enthusiasm for their roles and they are clear about what needs to improve further. Their actions plans are implemented rigorously and are reflective of their work to date.

At the start of the school year, leaders introduced a topic-based approach to the teaching of subjects beyond English and mathematics. This is providing pupils with a meaningful context for learning. While leaders have a clear rationale for the changes they have made, curriculum plans remain in the earliest stages of implementation. It is therefore too soon to be able to measure fully improvements to pupils' subject-specific skills and understanding.

Safeguarding arrangements remain fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding governor undertakes her duties with due diligence to ensure that procedures and policies are up to date with the most recent statutory guidance. Leaders remain vigilant in reporting any concerns relating to pupils in a timely manner. They maintain detailed records and chronology of their actions. Regular training and updates ensure that staff know the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. Pupils report that there is always someone whom they can turn to if they have any concerns.

Governors continue to strengthen their role. They play a full part in monitoring the work of the school and apply their skills well to ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties successfully. The pace with which they have improved their effectiveness means that all of the delegated powers previously removed from the governing body have now been restored. Records of governing body meetings reflect the good level of challenge provided to school leaders by governors. The chair of the governing body has steered the governing body effectively through their action plan and ensured that they are fully involved in monitoring the work of the school. As a result, governors now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are proactively involved in the life of the school and in securing rapid improvement.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Weaknesses identified with the quality of teaching in key stage 1 at the last monitoring visit remain. There has been some improvement to the quality of teaching in lower key stage 2, but this has not been as rapid as was hoped. This is despite considerable levels of training and support. Leaders are managing this sensitively and professionally and have arranged for additional support and several interventions to militate against the variability in the quality of teaching that still remains.

At the start of the school year, leaders introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing. It focuses upon pupils' practising the grammatical features of different styles of writing and then applying them to their own writing. This is having a positive effect on learning in upper key stage 2. However, in lower key stage 2 and key stage 1, there is a lack of consistency in teachers planning appropriately challenging sequences of learning. Work in pupils' books reflects this. Planned activities are often unrelated and not building pupils' writing skills progressively. Leaders acknowledge that there is more work to do and have plans in place to gain greater consistency in the quality of teachers' planning.

The leader for mathematics has supported staff to develop their subject knowledge. There is now greater clarity and support for teachers to plan sequences of lessons effectively. Teachers are ensuring that pupils have the right equipment to support them in their calculations. They are ensuring that pupils' reasoning skills are being developed from an early age. This is heartening and a marked improvement from the last monitoring visit. Leaders are not complacent. They know that there is still more work to do to secure pupils' reasoning skills further and to ensure that pupils receive regular opportunities to apply and consolidate their mathematical skills in other subjects.

Discrete phonics teaching has improved and is consistent. Staff are confident in their use of resources, as a result of the extensive training they have received, which includes visits to other schools to observe exemplary practice. Consequently, current pupils' outcomes are already showing improvement in both Year 1 and Year 2, compared with those submitted in 2017. While this is celebrated, there is more to do to ensure that teachers routinely encourage pupils to use and apply their phonics skills outside of the discrete lessons.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils are polite and welcoming, and keen to talk about their learning. Their behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils say that they feel safe in school.

The executive headteacher rightly is maintaining her focus upon improving pupils' attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are regularly away from school.

As a result, there is steady improvement to pupils' overall attendance rates. Pupils' behaviour is managed consistently and procedures for managing behaviour are well established and understood by pupils. Leaders manage more challenging behaviours with great sensitivity. Consequently, exclusions are rare and when they do occur it is as a last resort.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Since the previous monitoring visit, pupils' learning remains too variable, particularly at key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 and for boys. There is a much stronger picture of achievements in the early years and in upper key stage 2, where teaching is consistently effective. Pupils' progress in these year groups is strong. However, leaders are aware that Year 6 pupils' progress over time looks less favourable. This is due to overly generous historical assessment of pupils' outcomes and weaker teaching in the past. Leaders are doing all they can to militate against this.

There are small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities in each cohort. Leaders make effective use of a range of intervention strategies and use the advice and support from lead professionals to ensure that pupils' needs are met successfully. Pupils benefit from the effective support and encouragement that they receive. Their progress is strong.

Across the school, there are equally small numbers of disadvantaged pupils, some of whom have SEN. Leaders track their progress carefully to ensure that pupils' needs are being met precisely. Pupils benefit from the support and encouragement they receive.

Outcomes for the more able pupils remain too variable, particularly in key stage 1. Too often, work is not challenging enough for them to make the progress they are capable of achieving at the higher standard consistently. Leaders are already taking action to remedy this.

Across the school, pupils are enthusiastic learners, who are keen to learn new skills and new knowledge. They enjoy contributing to their lessons and are keen to share their ideas and to talk about their learning. As a result, they are becoming increasingly confident and independent learners.

### **Early years**

Since the last monitoring visit, the quality of teaching and learning in the Reception class has improved further. Children concentrate for sustained periods on a range of well-planned activities. They work effectively without direct adult support.

The early years leader uses assessment information effectively to adjust provision to meet the needs and interests of children. Opportunities for pupils to consolidate their early writing skills are available within all areas of learning.

Although leaders view outdoor learning as an ongoing area for improvement, it is now providing children with increasing opportunities to explore and investigate on a larger scale. Adults' intervention is timely and they use effective questioning to extend children's thinking consistently. As a result, children are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding more rapidly than was previously the case. Increasing proportions of children are on track to achieve a good level of development at the end of the school year than was previously the case.

### **External support**

Since the first monitoring inspection, support from the LAAT has continued. School leaders have benefited from a consistent school improvement adviser who offers appropriate levels of support and advice. Regular liaison with the trust's specialist teachers for writing and mathematics has bolstered subject leadership in these areas.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- secure improvements in the quality of teaching in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2, so that pupils are able to make the rapid progress required to reach the standards they are capable of
- ensure that whole-school curriculum plans are implemented fully to ensure that pupils' subject-specific skills are developed effectively.