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Anna Mills
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Dear Miss Mills

Special measures monitoring inspection of All Saints Church of England Academy

Following my visit with Justine Hocking and Raymond Hennessy, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 19–20 June 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve leadership and management at all levels, including the sixth form, by:
 - strengthening the governing body so that leaders are held fully to account for improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that leaders and governors accurately evaluate all aspects of the school's work and use this evaluation to develop and implement effective planning for improvement
 - developing the skills of senior and middle leaders in improving the quality and impact of teaching to raise standards, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
 - making sure that attendance initiatives are embedded and rates of pupil absence fall.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils significantly improve across the curriculum, including in the sixth form, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that the standards of work and pupils' rates of progress over time are at least good
 - providing pupils with appropriately challenging work, especially for the most able pupils
 - making sure pupils complete and present their work to a high standard
 - improving pupils' literacy skills, particularly use of accurate spelling
 - consistently promoting pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' work are accurate and consistent
 - significantly improving outcomes for those studying level 2 courses in English and/or mathematics in the sixth form.

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

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 June 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at documents and met with the acting headteacher and other leaders. Discussions were also held with governors, with a trustee and with representatives from a trust working in partnership with the school. Meetings were held with other staff and with groups of pupils, both formally and informally. Inspectors visited lessons to look at learning and to talk with pupils about their work. A range of pupils' work was scrutinised in order to assess the quality and impact of teaching, assessment and the curriculum over time. An inspector also visited the 'ready to learn centre' and examined records to do with pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Inspectors also looked closely at the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have continued to be significant and widespread changes to staffing at all levels. In April 2018, the previous headteacher left the school and a new headteacher has been appointed from September 2018. In the interim period, the deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher. There have been numerous staff changes affecting almost all subject areas, including the appointment of eight new middle leaders who are also due to start in September 2018. In addition, there have been new appointments to other positions in the senior leadership team. Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been two public consultations, first to suspend, and then to close, the sixth form. Since April 2018, there has been a formal partnership agreement between the school and the Ted Wragg Trust ('the trust').

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Improvements at the school are happening too slowly. At present, the school is unlikely to emerge from special measures within the expected period of two years since the previous full inspection. Weaknesses persist in pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, the curriculum and in the capacity of leaders at all levels and there are few signs of significant improvement. There are some early indications of impact from the recent involvement of the trust supporting the school. However, these are fragile and the school remains heavily reliant on external support.

Leaders and the trust are beginning to take action in many of the right areas. However, a high level of staff turnover is limiting the capacity and consistency of improvement. This affects the quality and impact of middle leadership in particular. Robust action has been taken to tackle weak leadership and ineffective teaching. However, staffing turbulence has made it difficult for leaders, governors and the trust to sustain and embed important improvements. To some extent, there is a reliance on a raft of new staff appointments, due to start in September, to 'reset'

the school.

In the meantime, the acting headteacher is working hard to manage the day-to-day running of the school, while also taking some action to bring about improvement over the longer term. However, a combination of limited leadership capacity and a focus on short-term imperatives has greatly reduced the ability of school and trust leaders to work strategically. Consequently, while leaders have strengthened some school systems and processes, they have had less success in bringing about more fundamental improvement.

Leaders and governors have too little useful information about how well their actions are improving the school. These weaknesses in self-evaluation are further limiting leaders, governors and the trust's ability to work strategically and develop effective plans for improvement. This is particularly the case for funding provided through the pupil premium.

Most notably, there has been too little impact from actions designed to improve the overall quality of teaching. Although effective steps have been taken to tackle the weakest teaching, there is not yet an effective, whole-school approach to improving the quality of teaching in all subject areas. An agreed set of standards for effective teaching has been drawn up, but there is much to do to establish these across the school. Teachers are unclear what is expected of them, or how they should go about implementing leaders' expectations. For example, a focus on marking and feedback has brought about little improvement in pupils' achievement.

Although leaders have high expectations for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, too little effective action has been taken to improve the quality of provision for these pupils. For example, the impact of classroom support varies considerably and there is too little effective oversight of the work of support staff. As a result, pupils who have SEN continue to underachieve.

Leaders and the trust have successfully developed a more suitable range of courses for the autumn term. There have been important changes made to the allocation of time and resources for subject areas, including a greater emphasis on English and mathematics. However, these changes have also led to the abrupt cancelling of some courses that pupils had begun earlier in the year, including in modern foreign languages. The 'secondary ready' curriculum, judged ineffective at the previous monitoring visit, continues to be taught in a revised model until the end of the summer term. This programme remains a poor use of curriculum time for younger pupils and flaws in its design mean that leaders are unable to evaluate its impact, other than anecdotally.

Too many middle leaders lack the skills and experience they need. They understand the importance of rapid improvements to teaching and the curriculum but are not having enough impact in bringing about the changes required. The effectiveness of line management and staff appraisal varies considerably. Not all staff recognise their

responsibility for, and contribution to, improving the school.

Despite these weaknesses, there are some areas of the school where there are signs of improvement. For example, the quality of leadership and teaching in science and in modern foreign languages is helping to raise achievement in these subjects. Some progress has also been made in tackling the overoptimistic and inaccurate picture of pupils' attainment provided by the school's approach to assessment. This has improved leaders' understanding of underachievement and has helped to identify those pupils in need of extra support. However, leaders recognise that further work is needed, particularly in key stage 3, to ensure that teachers' assessments are fully reliable.

The impact of the pupil premium remains inadequate. Decisions made about the use of this funding are not based on a rigorous evaluation of strategies used in the past. The checks made by leaders and governors on the use of this funding have not been effective. Steps taken to improve the use of the pupil premium since the previous monitoring inspection have not had enough impact. As a result, disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve and there is little sign of marked improvement. This is also the case for Year 7 catch-up funding. The 'secondary ready' programme, which is the main focus of this additional funding, has not had enough impact on helping pupils to make better progress.

Governors are having too little impact on improving the school. They have not challenged leaders sufficiently and do not have a clear enough understanding of school performance. In particular, governors do not know enough about the detail and impact of actions taken to improve the school. Governors are working to strengthen their skills and knowledge. However, discussions about the partnership with the trust and decisions over the future of the sixth form have limited governors' focus on school improvement. Although a new committee has been established to provide a governance structure for the partnership with the trust, this is in its early stages. For example, the terms of reference for this committee have not yet been agreed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Many of the weaknesses in teaching noted at the previous monitoring inspection persist. High levels of staff turnover combined with the frequent use of temporary staff have impeded attempts to bring about improvements to teaching across the school. Partly because of this, too many pupils do not value the education they receive. Policies for marking and feedback have not been followed consistently, have had little impact, and are ill-suited to some subjects such as mathematics.

There remains a culture of low expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and achievement across much of the school. For example, an onus on keeping pupils 'on task', including through copying from the board or from textbooks, frequently leads to low levels of challenge and engagement. While some pupils value the individual

guidance they receive, too few benefit from effective whole-class teaching. Sometimes, pupils struggle to produce their best work where assessment and coursework tasks have long-term deadlines. Pupils say that they find it easier to maintain their focus and progress through shorter-term activities and goals. Many of these weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment are a consequence of an ineffective whole-school approach to improving these aspects.

Too many pupils do not know how well they are doing, or what they need to work on to improve. In some subjects, pupils' targets are not useful in motivating them or helping them to achieve. Some pupils choose to be sent to the 'ready to learn' centre rather than go to lessons they do not enjoy or find boring.

Despite these weaknesses, there are some subjects where pupils make better progress. For example, some teaching in science, modern foreign languages and in drama helps pupils to gain confidence and improve their knowledge and skills. Pupils also report that learning is becoming more challenging in mathematics. However, there remain important weaknesses in pupils' progress in this subject. Too often, mathematics is presented as a series of rules to be learned, rather than as concepts and ideas to be understood. Despite clear evidence of repeated errors and misconceptions, teachers do not routinely check that pupils have understood well enough. Teaching in mathematics does not help pupils to make links to knowledge and skills they have already mastered.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Arrangements to safeguard staff and pupils are effective. The approach to managing any concerns about pupils, including referrals to the local authority, is well managed and record-keeping is detailed and secure. Leaders and the trust are also working together to improve pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour. In some areas, this work is beginning to bear fruit. For example, as a result of a focus on punctuality, including a 'breakfast club', there has been a marked decline in the proportion of pupils who are regularly late to school.

However, in other respects, there are continuing concerns over pupils' attendance. The proportion of unauthorised absence is rising and overall levels of attendance remain below national figures, including for disadvantaged pupils. Persistent absence remains high and actions taken to reduce it are not having enough impact. Leaders do not have enough information about the reasons why pupils do not attend school. For example, they are unsure about the extent to which holidays taken in term time, or pupils choosing not to attend school when referred to the 'ready to learn' centre, are adversely affecting attendance. This is because leaders and governors do not analyse and evaluate the reasons for pupils' absence carefully enough. As a result, the actions taken to reduce absence and persistent absence are not having enough impact.

There is also a mixed picture in relation to pupils' behaviour. The number of

permanent exclusions this academic year has been high. However, the proportion of pupils receiving at least one fixed-term exclusion has fallen since the time of the previous monitoring inspection. Similarly, the proportion of pupils receiving sanctions in school for poor behaviour has also reduced over time. However, many of the weaknesses in how attendance is managed are also seen in the way leaders tackle improvements to pupils' behaviour.

One of the most significant actions introduced around the time of the first monitoring inspection was a revised approach to managing behaviour, known as 'ready to learn'. Pupils say that behaviour remains better than it was before this policy was introduced. However, they also say that many of their lessons are still affected by poor behaviour and interruptions to learning. They remark that some pupils 'play the system' and use referrals to the 'ready to learn centre' as a way of avoiding certain lessons. Leaders do not analyse and evaluate referrals through the 'ready to learn' system carefully enough. This does not help them to understand how it could be improved, or to take a more proactive approach to managing and supporting pupils' behaviour. 'Ready to learn' remains a largely reactive strategy to dealing with the consequences of poor behaviour, rather than understanding and addressing the reasons behind it.

Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is rare and that they usually have confidence in school staff to deal with any concerns. Through the curriculum and in tutorial sessions, pupils learn about the importance of equality and diversity, and the consequences of discriminatory behaviour. Nevertheless, some pupils do not understand that certain types of language, including 'banter', are never acceptable. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they feel well-informed about responsible and safe behaviour online. Pupils also noted improvements to behaviour at social times and in corridors. However, they also remarked that pushing and boisterous behaviour sometimes happen in the changeover between lessons or at the end of the school day.

Provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is too weak. Many of the pupils who spoke to inspectors could not recall any advice or guidance they had been given that they felt had been useful. There is only a limited range of activities and information available for pupils and there is not a coherent programme for careers education. Opportunities for pupils who follow work-related courses, such as business studies in the sixth form, are much more effective and help pupils to link what they learn in school to the world of work.

Outcomes for pupils

Across the school, considerable underachievement persists. Too few pupils are making good progress, particularly in mathematics. This is most often the case for disadvantaged pupils and for boys. Pupils are not routinely challenged to produce their best work in all their subjects. Too often, pupils' books contain missing or incomplete work, or work which shows little care, attention and pride. Too little

attention is routinely paid to weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting.

School assessment information, and the evidence in pupils' work, shows that the most able pupils are also making slow progress in comparison to similar pupils nationally. Few of the most able pupils are on track to achieve the grades of which they are capable. Weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum mean that pupils are not always expected to think and try hard in all their subjects.

Outcomes in the sixth form remain weak. As a result of uncertainty over the plans for the sixth form, students are anxious and uncertain about the future. They are concerned about the continuity of their courses and the help they will get as they move into Year 13. They do not feel their needs are being taken closely enough into account, or feel well-informed enough about their options when they leave school.

External support

The school continues to receive support from the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance (TSA) and the Dartmoor TSA. For example, this support has helped to develop the curriculum and subject leadership in English, mathematics and science. These partnerships have also supported improvements in the reliability and accuracy of assessment information.

In April 2018, the school secured a formal partnership agreement with the Ted Wragg Trust. This has been very influential in managing important improvements to staffing, supporting the day-to-day running of the school and in beginning to tackle the most significant barriers to school improvement.