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13 June 2018

Miss Lucy Gibson  
The Colsterworth Church of England Primary School  
Back Lane  
Colsterworth  
Grantham  
Lincolnshire  
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Dear Miss Gibson

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Colsterworth Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I met with you and the chair of the governing body and had a discussion with a representative of the local authority. I also met with the executive headteacher of the academy trust the school plans to join in September 2018. I met with middle leaders and subject leaders, including the leader of the early years, who is the coordinator for provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I scrutinised pupils' work with you and the English subject leader, and you and I observed teaching in all six classes. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. In addition, I met with a group of pupils and listened to their views of the school.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been significant staff changes. A teacher in key stage 2, who was the subject leader for mathematics, left the school at Easter 2018. Two teachers will be leaving at the end of this academic year. From September 2018, the school will have five classes. Two new teachers have been appointed to

take up posts from September. In addition, the chair of the governing body plans to stand down at the end of this academic year. From September 2018, the school plans to join the Abbey Academies Trust.

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

You, middle leaders and other staff have had positive impact in areas on which you have focused. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years has improved and is above that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved considerably and is also above the national average. There is evidence in pupils' books that standards in writing and mathematics are improving, particularly recently. However, as you recognise, there is still considerable work to be done. School information shows that the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics are likely to decline at the end of key stage 1 and for writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

You have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching as a central priority. You have provided focused support where you identify weaknesses in the quality of teaching. You have ensured that an appropriate system for the management the performance of teachers is in place, and this has now been introduced for teaching assistants. Developing the role of teaching assistants was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have undertaken some work to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment and you hold meetings with staff to review the progress made by pupils.

There is evidence of teachers' raised expectations of what pupils can achieve. When we visited lessons, there was evidence of the language of challenge being used. For example, teachers providing mathematics challenges or referring to 'your next challenge'. I also saw the 'challenge champions' initiative in the early years and the use of 'learning questions' in lessons. Pupils told me, 'We have learning questions so we challenge ourselves to do something by the end of the lesson.' Classrooms are well organised to support learning. Pupils spoke positively about the new school display celebrating pupils' writing. They also commented positively on the new murals in the library. In some classes, teachers ask pupils to complete stimulating and challenging tasks. However, this is not consistent. While some pupils are asked to complete work at an appropriate level of difficulty, too often others lose focus because work is not challenging enough.

Leaders have not checked on pupils' attainment and progress carefully enough to hold staff more effectively to account and drive more rapid improvement. You expressed your confidence that, with a stable and experienced staff next year, the pace of improvement would improve. It is crucial that leaders are more rigorous in ensuring that 'non-negotiables' are securely implemented by all staff. Staff turbulence has undoubtedly presented challenges to the pace of improvement.

However, while leaders have ensured that there have been some clear improvements, the pace of improvement has not been as rapid as it could be in some areas.

The school improvement plans prioritise many of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. You have made adjustments to the plans so the impact of actions to bring about improvement can be better measured. However, some shortcomings identified at the previous inspection have not been prioritised. For example, promoting pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills is not identified as a priority in the school action plan. When we looked at pupils' books, we saw that teachers' promotion of these skills is inconsistent. Improvement plans still do not focus sharply enough on measurable targets for the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, of lower ability and the most able, and who have SEN and/or disabilities. These groups were identified at the previous inspection.

Your work to develop the effectiveness of middle leaders has not been as effective as it could be due to staffing changes. Nonetheless, middle and senior leaders show they have the capacity to improve standards. At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of early years provision. The new leader for the early years, who is also the deputy headteacher, has reviewed provision in the early years indoors and outside. She has ensured that children are provided with appropriate opportunities to develop across all the areas of learning. The inspector observed children engaged in imaginative play. Children were busy and staff used effective questioning to, for example, encourage children to predict whether the boats they had made as part of their 'Noah's Ark' topic would float.

Improving provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was a further area for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher, who is also the coordinator for provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, identifies that staff turbulence has compromised the quality of provision for pupils. She has a clear vision of the improvements needed. She has prioritised available resources to support provision. She has led or organised staff training sessions and is checking that plans to support pupils' learning are relevant and focused. While provision is beginning to improve, it is essential that this becomes a more central priority to enable more rapid improvement.

The leader for English, who is also the leader for the use of the pupil premium funding, is leading improvements and raising expectations for the quality of pupils' writing. Pupils' ability to write at length is improving, and there is evidence of recent work to raise expectations for the accuracy of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, again, leaders have not ensured that this is consistently the case.

You explained to me the challenges you encountered in trying to organise a review of the use of the pupil premium funding. The first part of the review has only

recently taken place. The nominated leader for the use of the pupil premium has rapidly acted upon recent advice, and is now creating a more robust plan for the use of the funding. However, leaders and governors have not ensured that the plan for the current academic year identifies well-targeted actions linked to focused, measurable outcomes for pupils. The governing body has not been as effective as it could be in holding leaders stringently to account for the impact of the funding on improving the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.

Members of the governing body visit the school to deepen their understanding of the school's work, including checking that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The governing body has not, however, ensured that a review of governance has taken place. Governors explained to me that this was delayed due to the academisation process. They also explained their difficulties in recruiting a full complement of members. Nonetheless, the governing body has not been as effective as it could be in holding leaders to account.

You have commissioned external support from a consultant to support individual teachers to improve the quality of their teaching. This was supported by the local authority, who also supported a bid for extra funding. The local authority is supporting the academisation process. It has also provided advice to support leaders' improvement planning. However, it has not been effective in ensuring that leaders act fully on all its recommendations.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

**Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.**

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lawson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**