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Mrs Alison Barron  
Acting Headteacher  
Adlington St Paul's Church of England Primary School  
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Adlington  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Mrs Barron

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Adlington St Paul's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 to 19 September 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2017.

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2017.**

- As a matter of urgency, rectify the weaknesses in leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - robust processes for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are implemented across the curriculum to inform clear actions for future improvements
  - the curriculum is developed in greater detail so that pupils develop a deeper understanding of their learning in all subjects
  - there is significant development for leaders at all levels, including governors, so that their skills are enhanced and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities for school improvement
  - the funding for disadvantaged pupils is used strategically to raise these pupils' outcomes
  - there is a clear strategy on how to improve outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Improve the progress of different groups of pupils in all key stages by ensuring that:
  - carefully planned tasks meet the needs and different abilities of pupils
  - the most able pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standards
  - pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive appropriate support to make sure that they progress well in their learning
  - staff are aware of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils so that these pupils make good progress in all aspects of their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching to establish higher aspirations by:
  - developing a wider range of questioning strategies to develop pupils' thinking skills
  - providing relevant professional development so that teachers have a good grasp of curriculum expectations in English, mathematics and across the curriculum
  - providing opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning skills
  - supporting teaching assistants to have a more positive influence on pupils' learning, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the early years by ensuring that:
  - adult interactions with children focus on furthering their learning
  - there is a clearer focus on learning in different areas of the early years environment to stimulate children's interest and engagement.

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 the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 September 2018**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, the inspector observed the school's work, reviewed documents and met with the acting headteacher and other school leaders. He spoke with some parents and carers, including several dropping their children off at school. He met with a random sample of eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with pupils around the school. The inspector met with teachers, teaching assistants, the chair of the governing body and five other governors. He held meetings with two representatives of the local authority, the director for education for the Diocese of Blackburn and the executive headteacher and inclusion manager from the proposed sponsor academy trust to discuss their work to support the school. He discussed safeguarding with school leaders. With the school's business support officer, the inspector discussed and reviewed the school's single central record of checks on the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers to work with pupils.

### **Context**

Three teachers at the school are new in post since the previous inspection in November 2017. At the time of this monitoring visit, the headteacher was absent from work and the acting headteacher had been in post at the school for one day. Actions are under way to change the school to an academy in the near future.

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

Since the previous inspection, some of the leaders' work to improve the quality of the school has not been prompt or thorough enough to address issues fully. However, these lingering weaknesses have not held staff or governors back from improving their work. This is because of skilled support for staff and governors from experts from outside the school, which has made a positive difference to the quality of governance, teaching and pupils' outcomes. The local authority, the governing body, the diocese and the proposed sponsor academy trust identified the need for greater support for school leaders. They have ensured that clear, proper arrangements have been speedily put into place to support the school. With the extra help and assistance, leaders' own work is now improving rapidly.

Leaders, the local authority and the proposed sponsor academy trust have helped the staff to accept the weaknesses which exist in the school and to commit to working together to improve this situation. Staff want to improve the school. Staff feel there is a clear way forward for the school to improve. The morale of staff has risen. As one member of staff said, 'We were broken at the time of the inspection ... now we're smiling again.'

Parents with whom the inspector spoke said that communication from leaders to

families has improved since the previous inspection. They said that leaders seek parents' views about the school's work more than in the past. However, some parents told the inspector that they would welcome more updates from leaders about changes in the school, including the move to academy status. Parents reported that their children's homework is more frequent and that, in key stage 1, it is more challenging.

The external review of the pupil premium spending which took place soon after the previous inspection is beginning to impact positively on the support for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are making greater gains in their learning than has been the case in recent years. Governors are asking more effective questions about the achievement of this group of pupils than in the past. Even so, some information about the school's strategy for disadvantaged pupils on the school's website is incomplete and does not meet government requirements.

Leaders' and staff's increased attention to the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is helping to direct support towards those pupils who need the most help with their learning. Leaders have a clear action plan in place to further improve this aspect of the school's work.

Governors now have a dedicated committee which checks on the quality of the school, helped ably the local authority. They have found the support from local authority officers particularly useful in sharpening the way in which they review the work of leaders. Governors now ask more challenging questions of school leaders about improvement. They do not accept school information at face value but look to double-check and to reason why.

Although an external review of governance was commissioned quickly, it took too much time for this work to take place. The school only received the completed review the day before this monitoring inspection took place. This delay has made it more difficult for governors to address all the aspects of their work that need to improve. For example, governors do not make sure that their visits to the school are sufficiently focused and structured, or shared afterwards with fellow governors. The actions set out in the external review are appropriate and governors are keen to improve their work. Senior leaders are taking clear steps to further strengthen governance.

Leaders have improved the school curriculum since the previous inspection. They took prompt steps with the local authority to improve the coordination and depth of learning for pupils across subjects. Now, through links with the proposed sponsor academy trust, leaders are introducing a new curriculum in cooperation with trust schools. Teachers are developing a sense that they can become more creative in organising the curriculum. They are enjoying learning with and alongside teachers from good and better schools, who are grappling with the very same dilemmas as they are. One teacher said, 'It's enthusing me and enthusing the pupils.' Leaders continue to make sure that staff understand their responsibilities for the

protection of pupils at the school. Leaders ensure that all relevant checks on the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers to work with pupils are in place. Pupils told me that they feel safe and feel able to raise any concerns about their own welfare. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and say that lessons at school help. The new acting headteacher has a detailed understanding of good practice in safeguarding. She has found that, even though safeguarding at the school remains effective, leaders do not challenge themselves enough about how their safeguarding work could be even better.

Through regular visits to the school, leaders from the proposed sponsor academy trust have developed a well-informed and comprehensive understanding of the work of Adlington St Paul's. They have clear plans for the further improvement of the school, including for leadership and management. They are liaising regularly with governors, school leaders and the local authority in preparation for the school's transition to academy status.

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

The quality of pupils' learning at the school has improved over the past 10 months. Pupils told me that they feel teaching is better because staff have been on training. Inspection evidence supports this view. Teachers and teaching assistants now make better use of questioning to support pupils' learning. Staff's expectations of what pupils should achieve are higher. Staff are more enthusiastic and confident in their teaching ability because of the training and support they have received since the previous inspection. One member of staff expressed the hope that 'Training needs to continue and not be a plaster for now.' Senior leaders are clear that all staff will continue to receive their entitlement to ongoing professional development.

Teachers' support and use of teaching assistants as members of the staff team are improving quickly. Teaching assistants said that they feel more valued and respected for their skills and ability. Training with their teacher colleagues, as well as specifically for them as a professional group, is making a big difference to their work. As one said, 'I'm deployed now to have a better impact on the learning of the pupils.'

Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is becoming much more accurate and reliable. This is because staff skills have improved through local authority support and moderation checks. Teachers and leaders are making much better use of assessment information when planning for pupils' learning. Leaders ensure that targets set by teachers for pupils' attainment match more closely to their needs.

In the early years, staff are more skilful because of training and support. Staff support children's learning much more purposefully. They make good use of the play areas, indoors and outdoors, to excite children about school. Parents of children new to the Reception Year told the inspector how pleased they are with their child's positive transition to Adlington St Paul's.

Pupils in key stage 2, for whom there was upheaval of staffing in spring and summer 2018 due to staff sickness, told the inspector that they found the changes in staff confusing. They said how pleased they are to now have more consistency in teaching staff.

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

Pupils are polite and courteous. Their behaviour is more positive in lessons because staff ensure that learning is better organised and engaging. Staff have improved their management of behaviour. A typical comment from pupils was 'Teachers have learned not to shout.' All pupils with whom the inspector spoke agreed that the new silent hand signal used by teachers to gain the attention of their class is having a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and listening skills.

Leaders have recently improved the quality of the school curriculum. This includes greater emphasis on pupils learning about different cultures. Given the recent nature of these changes, it is too soon to judge the impact.

Pupils continue to attend school punctually and often.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

School information indicates that pupils' attainment is improving across the school in reading, writing (mainly in key stage 1), mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Provisional information indicates that the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was in line with the national average in 2018. Pupils' progress is also improving, particularly in reading and mathematics. The difference in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is beginning to diminish across subjects. These pupils are making much stronger progress than in the past.

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check continues to rise, reflecting staff's growing skills and confidence in phonics teaching.

The proportion of children in the early years achieving a good level of development is rising year on year and is above average. Better teaching, assessment and leadership of this part of the school demonstrate that this improvement is likely to continue.

Pupils are now learning more successfully because of better teaching. They told the inspector that the most popular subject is mathematics. A typical comment was 'I used to dread mathematics but now the teachers make it fun and I like it better.' The progress of some pupils who experienced the most upheaval in staffing in 2017 to 2018 is less strong than that of their peers. Leaders and staff understand that the



challenge is to help some pupils to make up lost ground in their learning. Leaders are taking action to further improve pupils' achievement.

### **External support**

The local authority was already involved in supporting the school at the time of the previous inspection. This important work has since continued and strengthened. Local authority consultants for teaching and learning, mathematics, English and the early years have played a key role in supporting improvements in classroom practice. The quality of teachers' and teaching assistants' work is improving because of the training and advice they receive. The work of local authority officers is improving governors' ability to review more accurately the school's performance. Information shows that the local authority has also thoroughly reviewed, supported and challenged leaders to help the school to move forward.

Support from a local headteacher, and increasingly from the proposed sponsor academy trust, has also made a big difference to the work of staff and leaders in helping to improve teaching and leadership. Leaders' strengthened links with the academy trust have also improved the planning and evaluation of provision for specific pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The local authority, the diocese and the proposed academy trust are fully and accurately informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses and the steps needed to improve the school further.