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Miss Rachel Hydes  
Executive Headteacher  
Boston St Nicholas Church of England Primary School  
Woad Farm Road  
Boston  
Lincolnshire  
PE21 0EF

Dear Miss Hydes

### **Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Boston St Nicholas Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 October 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, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I met with the chief executive officer (CEO) and the vice-CEO of the Boston Witham Academy Federation. I also met with the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the leader for teaching and learning, the literacy adviser for the trust, and the external teaching and learning consultant. I met with the former interim headteacher and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Together with you, I observed learning in every class. I reviewed a range of pupils' current and previous workbooks and I held a discussion with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6.

I reviewed several documents, including policy documents and assessment information. I also reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including an examination of the school's single central record.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a sustained period of upheaval. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have all left the school over the past nine months, along with a significant proportion of the teaching staff. Some classes were without a regular teacher for much of the previous academic year, including in the early years foundation stage. The interim headteacher who was in post at the time of the inspection left the school in July 2018. There have been difficulties in finding a multi-academy trust that is acceptable to all stakeholders to run the school. The school is currently receiving temporary support from the Boston Witham Academy Federation. This includes the provision of an executive headteacher for part of the week, from September 2018, and a number of other members of staff, including teachers and support staff, as temporary replacements for the staff who have now left the school. The trust is also providing support for school improvement and central services such as safeguarding. This temporary arrangement will cease at the end of the current academic year. The school retains its status as a local authority maintained school.

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

Until September 2018, leaders and managers did not address the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. The school underwent a period of further decline, which is reflected in the provisional outcomes for 2018, in all key stages. In particular, the staffing instability had a significant and negative impact on the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years foundation stage.

The governing body is not fulfilling its statutory duties. Governors do not hold leaders to account for the school's performance and do not have a clear grasp of their role in providing strategic direction. There are too many vacancies on the governing body. The Diocese of Lincoln has not provided the full complement of foundation governors; there is currently only one out of the required four foundation governors in post.

Governors have not ensured that the school's website is compliant with statutory requirements. Many items are missing or out of date. This means that current and prospective parents and carers do not have accurate information about the school.

Governors have not ensured that the additional funding provided through the pupil premium and the physical education (PE) and sport premium is spent appropriately. They are unable to account for how these funds have been spent and there is no record of current plans, or an analysis of the effectiveness of any previous plans, either in school or on the school's website.

The executive headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and officers from Boston Witham Academy Federation, is providing effective leadership. She has

introduced a new assessment system that has increased the accuracy of teachers' judgements of what pupils know and can do. She has also ensured that expectations of teaching and learning are clear and consistent across the school. Evidence from current work in pupils' books and from my observations of learning in lessons suggests that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving. Teachers plan and set work that is increasingly well matched to pupils' abilities. There are increased opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning through problem solving. It is too soon to measure the impact of these early improvements on pupils' progress and attainment. The sustainability of the improvements is unclear. The temporary staff who have been provided by the trust are effective in their roles; however, they will leave the school at the end of the current academic year.

In discussion with pupils, they said that much of their work provides them with an appropriate degree of challenge. They said that they would welcome further challenge in science, mathematics and spelling. Pupils told me that behaviour has improved recently, both in lessons and at playtimes. They said that there is 'no bullying any more'. They attributed these improvements to their new teachers and the executive headteacher. During my tour of the school, I did not observe any instances of low-level disruptive behaviour.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics have received appropriate training for their role. They have developed clear plans for improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects, from September 2018. These middle leaders, working under the effective guidance of the deputy headteacher, show enthusiasm for their role and the capacity to be good role models for the rest of the staff. It is, however, too soon to evaluate the impact of their work.

Following the last inspection, the early years foundation stage teacher left the school. Her role was covered by a series of short-term supply teachers. Because of this instability, standards in early years declined further and a very small proportion of children achieved a good level of development at the end of the year. Children were woefully unprepared for the demands of Year 1.

From September 2018, an experienced early years teacher has been appointed, on a temporary basis, from the trust. She has ensured that the early years provision is now fit for purpose. Staff plan an appropriate range of activities, both inside and outside, which promote children's learning and development across all areas of learning. Although much improved, the teaching is not yet promoting children's language development strongly enough. The latest baseline assessments show that the majority of children have entered early years at a stage of development that is below, or well below, that which is typical for their age. In early years, as in the rest of the school, too many of the current improvements rest on the expertise of temporary staff.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action 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.

The leadership team that has been in place since September 2018 has ensured that a suitable improvement plan is in place for the current academic year. Working together with the local authority, the leadership team now has capacity to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. It is too soon, however, to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of Boston Witham Academy Federation, 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

Christine Watkins  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**