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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Gillian Standing and Mrs Anneka Fisher
Co-Headteachers
Wheatley Church of England Primary School
Littleworth Road
Wheatley
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX33 1NN

Dear Mrs Standing and Mrs Fisher

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wheatley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Catherine Veale, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 November 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 fourth 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the transitional governance committee, the

director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the chief executive officer of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Take urgent action to remedy weaknesses in safeguarding procedures and actively promote pupils' welfare, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all safeguarding procedures follow the current guidance issued by the Secretary of State and meet statutory requirements
 - the safeguarding policy is kept up to date and shared with staff and parents
 - risk assessments are completed appropriately, kept up to date and implemented effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all systems for monitoring the work of the school are robust, and leaders and managers are held to account for the progress of all groups of pupils
 - school self-evaluation is accurate and informs school improvement planning more effectively
 - school improvement planning is sharply focused on the impact leaders' actions have on improving outcomes for pupils
 - the progress of all groups of pupils is measured accurately by school leaders
 - middle leaders' skills are developed effectively to enable them to have a greater impact on improvements in teaching, learning and assessment
 - the school's curriculum is further developed to engage and excite pupils in a wide range of learning across all subjects
 - all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and thoroughly checked
 - the school's website meets statutory requirements
 - governors take a full and effective role in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
- Improve the personal development and welfare of pupils, by:
 - keeping accurate logs of all behaviour and bullying incidents
 - analysing patterns of behaviour in order to enable effective action to be taken to improve it.
- Improve provision and the quality of learning for children in the early years foundation stage, by:
 - providing a range of experiences that challenge and extend children's learning, including for the most able
 - making sure that all adults extend children's learning and develop their

understanding.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in order to raise standards and ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress, by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can do and the progress they can make
 - providing effective support for all groups of pupils to enable them to make at least good progress from their starting points
 - challenging the most able pupils to enable them to make rapid progress, gain a deeper level of understanding and reach high standards
 - increasing teachers' understanding of assessment and the progression of knowledge and skills in each subject
 - making sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are accurate
 - using assessment information to adjust plans and learning in lessons to provide sufficient challenge to all groups of pupils.

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

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 6 November 2018 to 7 November 2018

Evidence

All classes that were taught by their substantive class teachers were observed, from Reception Year to Years 3 and 4, some jointly with the co-headteachers. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were absent due to a residential off-site visit. As a result, pupils in Year 5 and some remaining Year 6 pupils were taught by temporary staff and these classes were not visited.

Inspectors met with both of you, and other staff with significant responsibilities, including leaders with responsibility for writing and phonics. A discussion was conducted with some class teachers and support staff. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer (CEO) and the principal schools' adviser, both from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST). A meeting was held with three members of the transitional governance committee (TGC), which now acts as the school's governing body, including both co-chairs. I also met with the diocesan education adviser, who also acts as the chair of the executive committee, which is part of the TGC. An inspector met with one of the school's temporary special educational needs coordinators (SENCo), who is based at a local primary school and works in this school one day a week. One of the co-headteachers also acts as a SENCo.

I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and met with five pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. I considered the school's own information on pupils' progress and attainment, records relating to safeguarding and advisers' notes of visits. The single central record was checked.

Context

From September 2018, you have both stepped into the full-time co-leadership arrangement as substantive headteachers, leading the school together. As planned, a consultant from the trust, who was acting as part-time headteacher for the summer term only, has ceased working at the school. In September 2018, the early years leader returned following a period of absence during the summer term.

The school's SENCo, after a period of absence, has resigned and will leave in December 2018. A local school, John Henry Newman Academy, which is also part of ODST, is providing SENCo support for one day a week, alongside additional support from Oxfordshire Schools Inclusion Team. The school continues to receive support from a range of advisers, including those specialising in early years and mathematics, as well as the principal schools' adviser from ODST.

A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in January 2019. This role will also carry a teaching commitment, initially with a Year 5 and Year 6 class. Some staff are leaving at the end of term, including four part-time job-

share teachers and a full-time teacher with responsibility for a Year 3 and Year 4 class. One part-time teacher is leaving, having joined the school in September 2018. This means that there will be changes to teaching arrangements in some classes in Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.

Governance arrangements have altered. The interim academy committee (IAC) ceased operations at the end of July 2018 following the departure of the chair. In September, ODST initiated a replacement governance structure referred to as the TGC. There are two committees. Two members of the previous IAC have been elected as co-chairs. Some new governors have also joined, including a governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You have continued to build well on the initial improvement work you initiated last term by sharing your vision and values widely. Secure forward steps in a myriad of respects, including the leadership of teaching and learning, safeguarding procedures, pupils' attendance and the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are all highly evident. Responsible stakeholders, including trustees, governors and advisers, are now pulling in the same direction and contributing well to kick-starting secure and steady improvement. Since your arrival, everyone has become much clearer about their roles and responsibilities. Crucially, lines of accountability are now much stronger and as a result, all staff are collectively providing much more targeted and useful support than in the past. Importantly, under your composed and assured leadership, a forward impetus is now distinguishable once again.

You have launched the school's raising achievement plan (RAP) for this academic year, sharing this widely with all members of the school community. This plan securely underpins everyone's efforts as it is well considered, thorough and correctly identifies the right priorities. You have made sure that staff, governors and advisers are working to their strengths and contributing strongly to addressing the key aims you have highlighted. Moreover, and significantly, your contribution is diligent, in-depth and unrelenting. As a result, you have clearly prompted a forward momentum that is gaining pace.

Trustees have actioned shortcomings highlighted at my last visit appropriately. For example, the trust has provided additional funds and expert guidance to better meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Also, the quality of governance is strengthening due to carefully considered appointments. Governors are communicating well with the trust and, in turn, trustees are responding promptly and appropriately. Joined-up thinking is coming to the fore.

Together with representatives from both ODST and the TGC, you are helpfully and methodically working through a backlog of policy reviews. Partnership working, together with greater shared responsibility, now characterise the school's work

more overtly. Sensibly, since my last visit you have prioritised meeting the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. Consequently, you have reviewed the school's special educational needs policy and information report. You have also strengthened safeguarding policies and procedures. You have made sure that key documents are available to families through the school's website.

You have continued to keep the safeguarding policy under close review and this was helpfully reviewed with all staff against the latest guidance issued at the beginning of this year. The school's single central record continues to be well maintained. Staff are vetted before employment and the appropriate checks completed.

The school's systems and procedures for keeping pupils safe have much improved since my last visit. These are now secure and effective. The school's record keeping is now much more methodical and orderly. For example, vulnerable pupils' case files and chronologies are updated as a matter of course. Furthermore, you have streamlined systems for recording and reporting concerns. Follow-up action and case outcomes are now more clearly documented. As a result, the family support worker, who also acts as a deputy designated safeguarding lead, holds clearer oversight of each pupil. Staff, too, are more confident in the school's procedures. You have reinstated 'at-risk children' meetings to discuss pupils' needs in greater depth and ensure that these are prioritised appropriately. Consequently, staff know that when they express a concern about a pupil, leaders will take the appropriate action.

Communication and engagement with families have strengthened considerably since my last visit. Together, you have established weekly, informative newsletters. Families are now kept better informed about the school's development, pupils' successes and forthcoming events. Parents and carers have continued to offer effective support to the school, including meeting the school's higher expectations of their child's attendance. Meetings about the school's progress are now more regular and parents have an increased opportunity to ask questions. This is helpful as you are uniting the community and enabling all to play a more active role in raising aspirations.

Staff absence, which has been too high in the past, has not hindered you in your quest to improve the school. Although the SENCo has remained absent for this term, you have taken up the mantle and begun to oversee more strongly this aspect of the school's provision. You have updated the school's policy and procedures, in line with statutory guidance. Bolstering this aspect further, the SENCo from a local school is working with staff on a weekly basis. Staff have appreciated this wise counsel and have, as a result, now identified pupils' needs more accurately. The school's SEN register is up to date and better reflects the full range of pupils' needs. Furthermore, pupils' individual plans have been shared with parents promptly and there is now a greater awareness of how these pupils can be better provided for.

The newly formed TGC is off to a good start and meets more regularly. All are clear about their roles and responsibilities, in part because trustees have ensured that a scheme of delegation is shared between parties in a timely manner. Additionally, trustees have appointed some new governors who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their roles. Expertise, such as in early years, safeguarding and in the use of performance information, is supporting leaders well. Governors, including the new co-chairs, are also attuned to the needs of the school community, not least because several were part of the original IAC. Even though they have recently adapted to a new structure, this has not hindered governors in their ability to provide robust challenge to school leaders. For example, following scrutiny and challenge by governors, prudent adjustments were made to the RAP. Governors are much more involved in school improvement planning than in the past. This is another positive sign that all are working towards the same goal. A more productive and strategic relationship between trustees, governors and leaders is firmly taking hold.

The school's website is improving as more of the required policies and procedures are kept under review, reflecting the school's practice more closely. External support has been utilised well to highlight any shortfall in what is required. Consequently, governors are aware that there are gaps in the reporting of the school's approach to promoting equalities, accessibility planning and how it uses pupil premium funding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is now led more convincingly and statutory processes, such as the performance management of teaching staff, are, for the first time in several years, fully established. Trustees, too, are playing their part by ensuring that corresponding policies such as those relating to teachers' pay and appraisal are reviewed regularly. You reinforce and re-visit your 'non-negotiables' with staff regularly. As a result, expectations have risen further. You know that this more rigorous approach is needed, but are aware that with its onset, weaknesses in teaching are highlighted more overtly. Nevertheless, where this is the case, teachers and teaching assistants are now receiving bespoke and targeted support. The quality of teaching in some classes is beginning to improve slowly and you have firmly set in place the building blocks needed for success.

Staff are much more positive than in the past. They appreciate the greater accountability and find your monitoring of teaching and learning helpful. There is a shared optimism emerging about the difference you are making. For the first time, staff have a much more compelling understanding of leaders' long-term view and the steps needed to improve the school's effectiveness.

The provision for pupils with SEND is developing gradually as there is now greater recognition and knowledge of pupils' learning and social needs. Much-needed education, health and care (EHC) plan applications are under way and the backlog

of requests is beginning to reduce. Additionally, the school is working more closely with appropriate external agencies, including the educational psychology service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Beneficially, teachers have a clearer view of adaptations that can support pupils with SEND. These are reflected well in the school's pupil profiles which are available in all classes. Some teachers are beginning to think more judiciously about how tasks are planned, and the resources needed for these pupils to experience success. As a result, more pupils with SEND are beginning to access learning opportunities. Nevertheless, this is not yet the case in all classes, where this information is not yet used well enough to prompt a positive impact on pupils' rates of progress.

Teachers are beginning to explore new ways of working, responding to the greater direction they now receive. Staff training is well planned, and teachers are benefiting from this. For example, teachers are trying to plan and deliver tasks that better meet the needs of different ability groups. However, success is somewhat mixed and there are still regular instances when tasks are either too hard or too easy. Nevertheless, this focus on effective teaching is a step forward as adults are demonstrating a growing awareness of the range of abilities within their classes and trying new techniques.

Teaching assistants have received a wealth of helpful training. They appreciate the opportunity to participate in planning discussions in weekly dedicated time. This is helping support staff to become more aware of how they can contribute positively to pupils' learning.

Parents are becoming more fully involved in their child's education. For example, you have changed the way that staff report to parents during the recent autumn term parents' consultations. Parents now receive more detailed and accurate information about their child's progress. Helpfully, some governors were also on hand to offer support and get to know families. Similarly, information sharing between school and parents of pupils with SEND is much more transparent. Furthermore, a recent consultation at parents' evening about the school's approach to homework was useful. You are determined that everyone works together, shaping the school to meet pupils' needs more effectively.

Progress in other aspects has been slower. The quality of teaching in early years is still not improving and standards remain low. Activities do not yet cater well enough for different aspects of learning, nor spark children's curiosity and interest sufficiently well. As a result, children tend to flit from one thing to another, displaying low levels of engagement. Although staff show a growing awareness of the need to engage in conversation with children, often these interactions have too limited an impact. Opportunities in areas such as expressive arts and design and number are too limited. This year, pupils joining Year 1 were not well prepared for the challenges that lay ahead.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attendance is improving securely. The attendance rate of all pupils has risen, and pupils' absence has reduced notably. More families are choosing not to take holiday in term time. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND, now attend more often than at the same point last year. Towards the end of last term, leaders communicated their raised expectations well with families. Now, families who take extended leave in term time are issued with penalty notice warning letters routinely. Acting decisively, you issued 35 letters in the first few weeks of your tenure, referring to 140 lost school days. You are not afraid to see this new approach through to reach the benchmark you have set. As a result, attendance for many pupils is improving significantly and quickly. The whole school community should be proud of this achievement.

This term, you have reviewed the school's behaviour and engagement policy. As with much of your work, you are determined to preserve some aspects that worked well, alongside re-vamping existing procedures where required. Your revised policy is fully understood as it was shared with all staff at the beginning of term. Pupils know and can recite the new school rules: 'be kind, be ready, be safe'. They are delighted with the display of posters that they designed as part of a competition to remind their peers of the new rules.

The introduction of the new behaviour policy has been well timed. Although in some classes, low-level chatter at inopportune moments remains a concern, in other classes pupils' behaviour is improving. This is because adults are now taking greater collective responsibility. Rather than calling for the headteachers, staff are now much more adept at restoring a purposeful atmosphere independently. When pupils become unsettled, there is now a clear procedure. The new learning base (Acorns), manned by two new dedicated teaching assistants who are responsible for behaviour, acts a sanctuary and helps pupils get back on track. This is helpful as, in many classes, pupils can increasingly get on with the task in hand and focus on learning well.

Pupils are enjoying greater responsibility. You have re-established the school council and the school's eco-committee. School councillors are beginning to see themselves as decision makers. They are proud of the difference they have already made to increasing the variety of outdoor equipment available at playtimes.

Outcomes for pupils

The use of assessment information has continued to develop. Leaders have been able to set more challenging targets with teachers this year and these are understood. Teachers are beginning to develop greater awareness of assessment information and to identify pupils' next steps more assuredly. Furthermore, the restoration of pupil progress meetings means that pupils' achievement is now at the forefront of everyone's minds.

You have revised the school's approach to the teaching of writing and mathematics. For example, pupils are responding positively to a text-based approach in literacy activities. In mathematics, pupils now participate in daily number and counting sessions. This is helpful in addressing gaps in pupils' basic skills. However, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics remains concerning. Pupils, many whom are performing below age-related expectations, are not yet catching up. Some pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and pupils with SEND, continue to make slow progress. Nonetheless, your determination to raise standards is obvious, though it is too soon to see the difference that this is making.

You have overhauled the teaching of phonics in key stage 1. Pupils are now grouped by ability and are receiving daily sessions. The leader with responsibility for this aspect is monitoring the quality of provision closely as pupils joined key stage 1 with underdeveloped reading skills. Consequently, many are underachieving. It is too soon to measure the impact of this more intensified approach.

The school's work to cater for its disadvantaged pupils does not yet meet requirements. In part, because of the absence of key staff, there are no firm plans in place for this academic year. However, leaders are fully aware of shortcomings in this regard and are seeking to remedy this quickly. A review is under way, and plans are under construction for this year.

External support

Additional support, much of which has been brokered by ODST's principal schools' adviser, is being targeted appropriately and utilised well. You are adamant that this support supplements the school's aims rather than, as in the past, simply becoming an 'add-on'. Mathematics and early years consultants continue to provide support, and staff, particularly in mathematics, are beginning to benefit from some of the advice they receive. Also, the meetings between the principal schools' adviser and teaching assistants are helping to initiate some improvement to the quality of teaching.

Everyone, including advisers, is working together much more closely than in the past. This is a positive step forward. As one member of staff noted, 'For the first time, we are all singing from the same hymn sheet.'