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Mr Simon Sprague
Headteacher
William Lovell Church of England Academy
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Dear Mr Sprague

Special measures monitoring inspection of William Lovell Church of England Academy

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 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 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 January 2018.

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.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Lincoln Anglican Academies Trust, 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

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2018.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the school's performance
 - putting in place a rigorous and coherent approach to improving the quality of teaching, in order to improve pupils' progress
 - ensuring that the school's assessment and feedback policy is applied as leaders intend it to be
 - building the capacity of all subject leaders to monitor and to improve the quality of teaching and learning within their subjects
 - reviewing the curriculum, especially in relation to vocational subjects, so that courses are matched more closely to pupils' interests and needs
 - ensuring that the trust provides strong and effective support for leaders and the local governing body.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and its impact on pupils' progress by:
 - using information about pupils' abilities and needs to plan learning that engages pupils and is sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able pupils
 - raising expectations of what all pupils are able to achieve including the presentation and quality of pupils' work.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - supporting all pupils to become more self-confident learners, especially older pupils
 - eradicating low-level disruption in lessons, so that all pupils can make at least good progress
 - putting effective strategies in place to reduce persistent absence and exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that the school's tracking systems to monitor pupils' attendance and behaviour are fit for purpose.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - leaders act more decisively on the recommendations of the March 2017 review of the use of the pupil premium funding, so that the needs of

disadvantaged pupils are met better

- pupils' underperformance in mathematics and English is reduced by improving the quality of subject leadership and teaching in these areas
- disadvantaged and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive better support, so that they can catch up with other pupils.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 20 November 2018 to 21 November 2018

Evidence

I observed the school's work and met with the interim headteachers, subject leaders, the inclusion manager, the special educational needs coordinator, the chief executive officer of the trust and a member of the local governing body. I held a formal discussion with a group of pupils and spoke informally with pupils during lessons and social time. I also met with a group of staff. I observed teaching in a range of subjects across key stages 3 and 4, making short visits to 12 lessons. These visits were conducted jointly with the interim headteachers. Together with school leaders, I looked at samples of pupils' work from Years 8 and 10 across a number of subjects. I considered a wide range of documentation, including information on the school's website, and policies and records of pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance, as well as records relating to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). I also examined the school's safeguarding procedures and records.

Context

The school is the single secondary academy in the Lincoln Anglican Academies Trust (LAAT). Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the senior leadership at the school. Eight members of staff have left the school. The acting headteacher in post at the time of the previous inspection has since left the school. The trust appointed an interim headteacher who took up the post in May 2018. An additional interim headteacher was also appointed and joined the school in September 2018. A recent appointment to the position of deputy headteacher has been secured by the trust. However, this person will not take up the post until January 2019. Two additional members of staff are due to leave the school in December 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has experienced significant turbulence in staffing within the senior leadership team since the school was judged to require special measures in January 2018. The current arrangement of two interim headteachers has been in place since September. This instability has meant that many of the planned improvement actions were not implemented quickly enough or effectively. Current leaders have quickly gained an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have taken swift action to bring about some of the necessary improvements. Many of these developments are, however, in their infancy.

The school's leadership is now in a more stable position. The present leaders provide a unified and coherent partnership. They have brought a renewed energy

and determination to drive school improvement and, consequently, the pace of improvement is accelerating. However, the capacity of leaders to secure substantial change is presently insufficient. The level of support provided by the LAAT, including access to external consultants, has decreased since June 2018. Current leaders are now driving improvement without the intense support necessary for a school in this position.

Following the section 5 inspection, leaders drew up a comprehensive action plan to address the areas for improvement. This action plan sets out key actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including setting out the basic expectations that should be evident in all lessons. The plan also outlines key measures to improve the attendance and behaviour of pupils. Key actions, timescales and lines of accountability are clear. However, the plan does not consistently contain specific and measurable success criteria to help leaders and governors to fully evaluate the success, or otherwise, of leaders' actions. Until recently, improvements in teaching were not developed with sufficient urgency across the school and there was a lack of strategic oversight in this area of the school's work. As a result, although there has been some improvement, many of the weaknesses evident at the last inspection remain.

Senior leaders are working more closely with subject and pastoral leaders to monitor and accurately evaluate the quality of the school's provision. Leaders have put into place more stringent line management and quality assurance processes to hold middle leaders and teaching staff to account for pupils' achievement. There remain, however, variations in the effectiveness of middle leaders in driving the improvements required, particularly in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The leadership for pupils with SEND is strengthening. The creation of a new learning support base in the school has enabled staff to meet the needs of these pupils more closely. As a result, they are beginning to make better progress than was previously the case. While this aspect of leadership is improving, the oversight for the funding of, and provision for, pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is ineffective. Leaders have not followed up the recommendations made in the pupil premium review of March 2017. While there have been some marginal improvements in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, leaders lack clarity and urgency in effective planning to meet the needs of these pupils.

Governors are well intentioned and committed to seeing rapid improvements in the school. Recently, they have become more reliably informed about the developments in school improvement. The delays in securing stable leadership in the school have meant that trustees and governors have only recently begun to have a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the school's improvement work. A review of governance was recommended at the last inspection and, although plans are now in place, this was not acted upon by the trust quickly enough.

The curriculum at key stage 4 has been partially reviewed. Some changes have been made to strengthen the provision for vocational subjects. Leaders have introduced a new BTEC National Diploma in sport. This qualification has been well received and pupils achieved well in 2018. This change has improved pupils' access to the curriculum content and has also been positively welcomed by pupils.

Despite the instability that the school has gone through, and some ongoing difficulties, leaders' recent actions have instilled a sense of optimism about the future of the school and this is beginning to take hold. Staff who spoke with the inspector reported that the school's culture and ethos are positive. The quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour are beginning to improve. Under the current leadership, there are emerging signs of a better future for the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Until recently, the pace of improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been slow. Current senior leaders have begun work to ensure that staff understand the school's expectations for teachers' planning – referred to as the 'non-negotiables'. They have put in place a range of professional development opportunities, including coaching and mentoring programmes, which enable teachers to plan learning to meet the needs of all pupils and specific groups of pupils. However, the extent to which all staff have applied these expectations remains too variable within and between different subject areas.

Teachers have good subject knowledge but do not use it consistently well enough to inspire and enthuse pupils in their learning. The quality of teachers' questioning of what pupils know or can do is also variable. Questioning does not consistently deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding or skills, especially in key stage 3. Sometimes, teachers move the learning on too quickly before checking that all pupils have understood. Teachers do not routinely use information about pupils' prior attainment to ensure that work is set at the right level, particularly for the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils' work shows that there continue to be disparities in standards of presentation and the extent to which all pupils complete the work expected of them. In some subjects, such as science and geography, teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough and learning activities are not sufficiently engaging or challenging. Consequently, pupils drift off task and low-level disruption occurs. Pupils say that their enjoyment of learning is too variable, depending on which teacher they have.

Despite these weaknesses, there are pockets of strong practice. For example, in a Year 7 physical education lesson, all pupils were fully engaged in their circuit training and responded positively to the enthusiasm and constant encouragement of their teacher. In these subjects, a consistent combination of high expectations, appropriately challenging work and constructive feedback and assessment is

enabling pupils to demonstrate faster progress. In Year 11 mathematics and Year 10 art, engaging activities, together with high challenge and high expectations, are having a positive impact on learning. In these subjects, pupils say that they are enjoying their learning, feel well supported and take greater pride in, and responsibility for, the quality and presentation of their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Current leaders have taken determined action to improve the culture of the school and overall standards of behaviour. Leaders have implemented a new 'house' structure, including mixed-age tutor groups, to strengthen the relationships between pupils of different year groups. While it is early days, this change has been welcomed by staff and pupils are beginning to appreciate the opportunities for wider social integration. During the inspection, pupils were observed in a house assembly which reinforced the importance of personal qualities, such as resilience, determination and perseverance. Pupils listened well and took opportunities for individual reflection on the purpose and meaning of the assembly and in sharing their thoughts with their peers.

Leaders have also recently implemented a new policy for the management of behaviour, with a stronger focus on acknowledging positive behaviour. A new 'on-call' procedure and the creation of a specific 'behaviour for learning' centre are helping to reduce the number of disturbances during lesson time and social time. The proportion of pupils receiving a fixed-term exclusion has reduced. However, the proportion of pupils in receipt of an internal school sanction is high. Leaders are tracking and monitoring this situation closely, particularly given the infancy of the new policy. In lessons, pupils continue to be quiet and compliant overall. When the teaching is not sufficiently engaging or challenging, however, pupils' concentration wanes and poor behaviour results. Pupils who spoke with the inspector confirmed this and say that lessons are still disrupted by some pupils in some subjects.

The general conduct of pupils throughout the school day is orderly and respectful. Areas of the school are well supervised during social time. Where space is tight, particularly in the school's small dining room, pupils were observed to queue respectfully and integrate well with their peers. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that incidences of bullying are low. Leaders ensure that daily contact is made to check that pupils attending alternative education, with 'Build a Future', are safe, attending regularly and behaving well.

Pupils are typically punctual to their lessons. Overall attendance is beginning to improve, although levels of absence remain above the national averages. Leaders recognise the importance of this issue and are tracking attendance more closely. Leaders are now taking more determined steps to improve attendance, particularly for pupils who are regularly absent from school. This includes using external services supported by the trust. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND regularly absent from school remains stubbornly high. There

are promising signs of further improvement and staff continue to work on improving the attendance of all pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2018, pupils' overall attainment was well below the national average. Pupils' overall progress by the end of key stage 4 was well below the national average and has been for the past three years. The most able pupils continue to underachieve significantly. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not improving quickly enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress across all subjects.

Disparities remain in how well pupils achieve in different subjects. Pupils' progress in English is weaker than in mathematics, for example, while achievement in humanities and modern languages is not improving rapidly enough. However, in some optional subjects, pupils are making secure progress, including, for example art, food and nutrition, and the BTEC National Diploma in sport. Progress in mathematics has improved more rapidly. These differences reflect the contrasts in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between subject areas.

Despite some improvement in 2018, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils continues to be well below average. Leaders do not have clear plans in place to improve provision for these pupils. The recommendations set out in the March 2017 pupil premium review have not been fully acted upon. Leaders acknowledge that the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils requires urgent attention. By contrast, pupils with SEND are beginning to make better progress in English and mathematics due to the closer levels of support they are now receiving.

New approaches to assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress have recently been introduced by leaders. In most subjects, pupils know their target grades and are beginning to understand better how they can make improvements to their work, particularly at key stage 4. Leaders have recently acted to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments. For example, there are opportunities for teachers to work together within the school to check that they are assessing correctly. There are also plans in place to increase the number of opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues from other schools to further ensure reliability in assessment. However, it is too soon to judge the impact and effectiveness of the school's new assessment system.

External support

Prior to May 2018, the trust contracted the services of several external consultants to support leaders in the school. This arrangement was subsequently deemed to be ineffective and changes in school leadership were made.

The current interim headteachers have made links with a local collaboration of schools in similar contexts to share effective practice. Plans are also in place, driven

by the trust, to extend similar opportunities with higher-performing schools in the region by establishing a link with an existing teaching school alliance. These plans are in their infancy and it is too soon to comment on the effectiveness of these links. Too much time has been lost in putting intended plans into action.

Leaders and governors should take further action to:

- ensure that the school's action plan contains clear and measurable milestones and success criteria so that trustees and governors can hold leaders stringently to account for its implementation.