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Dear Mr Sargeant

Special measures monitoring inspection of All Saints Church of England Academy

Following my visit with Ben Houghton, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 2–3 April 2019, 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 am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve leadership and management at all levels, including the sixth form, by:
 - strengthening the governing body so that leaders are held fully to account for improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that leaders and governors accurately evaluate all aspects of the school's work and use this evaluation to develop and implement effective planning for improvement
 - developing the skills of senior and middle leaders in improving the quality and impact of teaching to raise standards, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
 - making sure that attendance initiatives are embedded and rates of pupil absence fall.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils significantly improve across the curriculum, including in the sixth form, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that the standards of work and pupils' rates of progress over time are at least good
 - providing pupils with appropriately challenging work, especially for the most able pupils
 - making sure pupils complete and present their work to a high standard
 - improving pupils' literacy skills, particularly use of accurate spelling
 - consistently promoting pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' work are accurate and consistent
 - significantly improving outcomes for those studying level 2 courses in English and/or mathematics in the sixth form.

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 April 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the headteacher and with other leaders. Meetings were held with a range of staff and with pupils in small groups and in lessons. Discussions were held with two governors and with the chief executive officer from the trust that is working in partnership with the school. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a member of staff at an alternative provision used by the school. Inspectors visited lessons across a range of subjects, talked with pupils about their learning, looked at their work and evaluated improvements to their behaviour. They also considered the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding. The lead inspector met with the Principal of Reach Academy Feltham, which is supporting the school.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher has restructured the senior and pastoral leadership teams. This has included the addition of a deputy headteacher post, an assistant headteacher for curriculum and an assistant headteacher who will lead on provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The partnership with Reach Academy Feltham has continued, with a significant focus on leadership and on curriculum design. The sixth form will close at the end of the current academic year. Only a small number of Year 13 students completing their examination courses were in school at the time of the inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The impact of leaders and managers at all levels continues to improve. Senior leaders are impressively clear in their thinking and increasingly able to plan and act strategically. Their evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and their plans for further improvement well reasoned and tightly focused. They are rightly prioritising the curriculum and the quality of pupils' learning. Leaders and the trust have raised the profile of the importance of study and 'scholastic excellence' as part of a successful focus on culture, climate and ethos that is raising aspirations across the school community.

There are high levels of buy-in from staff to implement the changes needed. Capacity for further improvement is increasing in an environment of support and collaboration. The school's approach to a supportive coaching model for staff training is an example of this. A recent restructuring of leadership responsibilities has put the school on a firm footing for further improvement. There is a strongly principled approach to building sustainable foundations for the longer term, alongside short-term imperatives such as raising standards for older pupils currently in the school. Support from key partners is also helping to maintain momentum and drive.

Middle leaders are increasingly effective. They are developing their skills in quality assuring and supporting developments in their subject areas. They are working very well as a team, supported and held to account effectively through line management arrangements. They are sharing good practice and are clear about the next steps needed in their teams to raise achievement, especially for pupils who have SEND.

Senior leaders are developing their approach to quality assurance too. They are shifting the emphasis of their quality checks to understanding how well pupils are learning the knowledge and skills set out in curriculum planning. They rightly believe that evidence about quality should be more wide-ranging than snapshots of teaching seen in lessons. They are working with the trust and other partners to refine this practice.

There is an improved focus on the needs of all groups of pupils. There is now a more effective plan for the use of the pupil premium. However, the plan does not set out how the impact of all the strategies included in it will be measured. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to hold staff to account for the impact of this funding. For example, very little funding is currently allocated to improving the impact of careers information, advice and guidance for disadvantaged pupils, and it is not fully clear how the impact will be evaluated.

An external review of provision for pupils who have SEND has been completed. Leaders have moved quickly in response, appointing new leadership for this part of the school's work. Support staff are increasingly looking at the reasons for behaviour referrals of pupils who have SEND. They are using this information to address any issues identified and the number of referrals to the 'ready to learn' centre is falling. Governors are also improving their understanding and oversight of this aspect. While there is emerging evidence of some improvements to pupils' progress, leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils who have SEND are supported more effectively in lessons.

In response to the previous monitoring inspection, leaders have also improved the breadth and variety of careers advice, information and guidance for pupils. For example, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Year 10 pupils completing work experience placements compared with the previous year. Although all Year 11 pupils now receive individual careers interviews, pupils in both key stages do not have all the information they need to help them make decisions about their future. By contrast, in the sixth form, staff have ensured that a suitable range of advice and guidance is available to students. Almost all sixth-form students have secured places in training, employment or higher education. However, as the school's own self-review recognises, there is more work to do to increase the impact of guidance and advice provided for pupils in Years 7 to 11.

Governance continues to improve. Through changes such as a new governance structure, governors are now providing more rigorous and searching challenge on the impact of school leaders' decisions. For example, governors are asking about the impact of actions to improve teaching and assessment. They are also starting to

consider how to provide effective governance of improvements to the curriculum. They have a greater understanding of pupil premium spending but recognise that they need more detail about the impact this funding is having on pupils' outcomes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum are continuing to develop well. Leaders have set out their expectations of learning and behaviour in lessons and these are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Across the school, teachers are thinking much more about how pupils learn, retain and recall important knowledge and skills. They are adapting their practice to help pupils to 'know more and remember more'. For example, pupils say the 'do now' approach at the beginning of each lesson helps them to review, recall and preview their learning. Leaders are also trialling new ways of providing feedback to pupils. Pupils say they prefer feedback which is immediate and helps them to get 'unstuck'. There are early signs that these revised approaches are helping pupils to improve their work.

Leaders have raised expectations without being overly prescriptive. First and foremost, they believe that teachers should plan learning in ways which best meet the needs of all pupils. For example, they have reviewed their expectations in relation to 'differentiation' (how lessons are adjusted to cater for pupils' abilities and prior learning). Recognising the implications for staff workload, they do not expect teachers always to plan a range of different activities in the same lesson for pupils of different abilities. Instead, the expectation is that all pupils will be supported – or 'scaffolded' – to access a common core of challenging curriculum content. Although the impact of this approach is in its early stages, this is contributing to improvements across the school. Rightly, leaders recognise that staff need further information and support to help pupils who have SEND to make better progress.

Supported by key partners, leaders are also working to improve the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, the curriculum content is now more challenging and the rationale for content choices and sequencing is clear. Pupils are given enough time to learn in depth and to make connections. Nevertheless, at times, there are inconsistencies in the ways in which some content and methods are introduced to pupils. Leaders are working with partners to decide the specific way in which mathematical concepts and methods would be best taught to all pupils.

In addition to reviewing the content of the curriculum in different subjects, leaders are developing a more integrated curriculum and assessment model. Currently, work is more advanced in key stage 4 than it is in key stage 3. In key stage 4, leaders are using the GCSE subject specifications to provide a framework for assessment. By contrast, in key stage 3, there are inconsistencies in assessment practice. For example, in some subjects, such as science, GCSE criteria and grading approaches are being used in ways which do not help teachers or pupils understand how well the key stage 3 curriculum is being learned. Leaders are working with colleagues across the trust to develop a common model for curriculum and assessment across both key stages. Considerable progress has been made in setting

out a shared vision and plan for implementation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They are usually attentive and listen well to the teacher and to each other. Most pupils try hard to produce their best work, including for homework. In a small number of lessons, such as those taken by temporary staff, behaviour can sometimes fall below leaders' high expectations. However, almost all pupils are cooperative and respect the ethos and culture of learning in the school. For example, pupils responded calmly and sensibly to an unplanned fire alarm on the second day of the inspection.

Staff say they feel well supported by leaders in managing pupils' behaviour. Instances of poor behaviour are usually tackled through the school's 'ready to learn' approach. Pupils say this approach generally works well, although they are sometimes frustrated by inconsistencies in how the system is used. As behaviour improves, so the number of referrals to the school's 'ready to learn' centre has also fallen. Overall, there has been a 50% reduction in the number of referrals compared to the same period in the previous year.

There has also been a reduction in the use of fixed-term exclusion. Compared to a similar period in the previous year, around one fifth fewer pupils have been excluded from school, and there are fewer repeat exclusions. Pupils who have SEND are also being excluded less often than in the past. Although three pupils have been permanently excluded, leaders made every effort to avoid the use of this sanction, and in each case its eventual use was fully justified. Where pupils have attended alternative provision for behaviour reasons, they are helped to keep on track with their learning when they return to school.

Attendance is improving, although only slowly. It is higher than at the same point in the previous year, but below the average for secondary schools nationally. Staff work hard to encourage better attendance, particularly where pupils' persistent absence has been a long-term issue. The attendance of pupils who have SEND has also improved and is in line with that of other pupils. Attendance of students in the sixth form is carefully checked and prompt action taken should there be any concerns.

Following the previous monitoring inspection, leaders now ensure that records are kept when pupils leave the school before completing Year 11. Inspectors looked carefully at the reasons why 25 pupils had left the school during the current academic year and were satisfied that these records gave no cause for concern. Where pupils leave for elective home education, leaders make sure that parents understand fully their responsibilities and that the option remains for pupils to return to resume their education in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

In the past, teaching and the curriculum were ineffective in helping pupils to learn well. As a result, some pupils currently in the school struggle to recall important information or to make links with other things they have learned. Sometimes pupils lack confidence in tackling harder work or in responding to teachers' questions.

Leaders are tackling this issue through improvements to teaching and the curriculum. The curriculum is being reviewed to ensure that the things pupils learn are challenging, are organised in an effective order, build on what they already know and help them to learn more effectively. There is a strong focus on pupils' memory and recall, including through the recent introduction of 'knowledge organisers' throughout the school.

Because of these changes, attainment and progress are both improving, particularly in younger year groups. The quality of pupils' work is also rising, and scruffy or slapdash work is rarely accepted. The lowest-attaining pupils, especially those who find reading difficult, are also being supported to make better progress. Sometimes pupils struggle to take a full part in all aspects of the curriculum, such as in modern foreign languages, because of significant weaknesses in their literacy skills.

A small number of pupils attend alternative provision for all or some of their lessons. The school works carefully with providers to ensure that this complements and supports their learning in other subjects and that they do not fall behind. The emphasis is on ensuring that pupils return to the school and follow a full-time timetable successfully. In the great majority of cases, this approach works well, and pupils' learning is rarely interrupted.

External support

External support is extremely well planned and deployed. Its effectiveness represents an example of how partnerships, including with geographically distant partner schools, can be designed and implemented to bring about rapid and sustained improvement. In the early days, these partnerships focused on supporting leaders to prioritise and sequence improvement actions. Expertise has been judiciously deployed with an eye to modelling and building capacity, rather than to focusing on a set of short-term actions which do not attend to the school's core weaknesses. The school is set to join the Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust, once due diligence has been completed. The focus for support from the trust and from the school's other key partner Reach Academy Feltham has been on leadership, curriculum and assessment. In everything, the emphasis has been on collaboration and co-construction, rather than on top-down imposition.