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27 September 2019

Mr Simon Sprague  
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Lincolnshire  
PE22 8AA

Dear Mr Sprague

**Special measures monitoring inspection of William Lovell Church of England Academy**

Following my visit with Chris Davies, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10–11 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2018. 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.

The school's improvement action 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 pupils 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 second monitoring inspection on 10 September 2019 to 11 September 2019**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and head of school. Meetings were also held with other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the inclusion manager. Inspectors held discussions with five groups of pupils and spoke with pupils during lessons and social time. They also met with representative groups of teaching and support staff. Inspectors made short visits to lessons in a range of subjects at key stages 3 and 4 and looked at samples of pupils' work in Years 7 and 10. Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation including school policies, records of behaviour and attendance and records relating to pupils with special educational needs. Safeguarding procedures and record-keeping were also scrutinised, including for pupils on alternative placements. A telephone conversation was held with the chair of the local governing body. A meeting was also held with the chief executive officer of the Lincoln Anglican Academies Trust.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been further significant changes in senior leadership and teaching staff at the school. Leaders, with the support of the trust, have reorganised the school's staffing structure and have increased leadership capacity. The former arrangement of two interim-headteacher posts has been consolidated into one executive headteacher position. A deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2019 and became the head of school from September 2019. Three assistant headteacher positions commenced at the start of the school year. These leaders have significant responsibility for the oversight of the curriculum in English, mathematics and science. They also have responsibility for overseeing the planning and delivery of wider curriculum subjects, replacing the previous faculty arrangement. Over the course of the last academic year nine members of staff have left the school. Six new members of staff have joined the school. Presently the school is fully staffed with subject specialists in all curriculum areas.

### **The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection**

#### **Quality of education**

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum in both key stages. They have reduced key stage 4 from three years to two. This means that pupils now experience a broad range of subjects at key stage 3 over three years. There is an appropriate balance of academic and vocational subjects to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Leaders have introduced a short course in religious education for all pupils at key stage 4, reflecting the school's Anglican ethos. Leaders are aware of the

government's target to increase the proportion of pupils who follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. They have reintroduced French into the curriculum and have ensured that those pupils wishing to follow the 'Ebacc' are able to do so.

In the previous school year, the significant changes in staffing and the high proportion of temporary staff had a detrimental impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning in some subjects, including science. Older pupils reported to inspectors that they are beginning to feel more confident that new staff will be retained for the longer term. They expressed strong views about their need for stability and continuity with their teachers.

The reorganisation of subject leadership for the start of the new school year means that subject leadership is not as well developed as senior leaders and governors would have wished. Many subject leaders are new to their role. The implementation of leaders' vision for the curriculum is therefore at an early stage of development. Not all subject leaders have thought about how to plan the curriculum so that pupils know more and remember more. Planning is at a more advanced stage in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and is emerging in science. It is less well developed in the subjects such as geography, art, physical education and food technology. Leaders recognise that there is much to do to ensure that the curriculum builds sequential and progressive knowledge for all pupils across the full range of subjects and helps pupils to become confident learners.

Leaders have started to tackle the weaknesses in the quality of education identified at the last inspection. Opportunities for professional learning are carefully coordinated, although the impact of this is not yet seen in all subjects. Nonetheless, teachers' subject knowledge is secure and relationships with pupils are typically positive.

Inspectors' visits to lessons across a range of subjects reflect the variation in the quality of curriculum planning. In some subjects, learning is well planned to take account of what pupils need to learn next, and how they learn. In English literature, for example, pupils were able to demonstrate a sharp analysis of their study of 'An Inspector Calls'. Carefully scaffolded questioning by the teacher enabled pupils to become confident in structuring and sharing their thinking. Pupils responded positively to the high expectations of their teacher.

However, this is not the case in all subjects. In some subjects, the curriculum focuses too much on the development of skills and not enough on what pupils need to know next. In a science lesson, for example, pupils were quietly engaged in drawing diagrams of cells found in the human lung. They were less confident, however, in the technical subject vocabulary required to label their diagrams accurately.

Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work also showed variations in the depth of learning between subjects and between key stages. The core subjects of English,

mathematics and science demonstrate clearer evidence of curriculum progression and gains in knowledge leading to progress in learning. This is less consistently evident in other subject areas.

### **Personal development**

The new 'house' structure of mixed-age tutor groups has strengthened the relationships between pupils of different year groups. Pupils and staff told inspectors that they are happy with this arrangement. Pupils know who they can talk to about any worries or concerns. The appointment of a full-time 'well-being mentor' has also helped pupils who require additional support. Leaders' investment in closely mentoring disadvantaged pupils is beginning to show impact in the attitudes and achievement of these pupils. The pastoral care afforded to pupils is a strength of the school.

The programme of personal, social and economic development covers a wide range of themes which include personal safety, finance, healthy relationships and building resilience. However, pupils who spoke with inspectors typically struggled to recall the key messages from this important aspect of their education. Learning is not well planned enough to ensure that pupils are able to revisit the key themes.

The number of pupils receiving some or all of their education at alternative placements has reduced in the current school year. The small number of pupils in receipt of alternative education attend and behave well. Leaders make regular visits to centres such as 'Build a Future' to check on pupils' progress and well-being.

Pupils told inspectors that there are limited opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. They struggled to recall examples outside sport and recent musical productions. The range of opportunities in music has increased and pupils say that they appreciate this. Pupils said that they would like more opportunities to get involved in activities beyond their timetabled lessons.

### **Behaviour and attitudes**

At the time of the first monitoring visit, leaders had only recently introduced a new policy to improve standards in pupils' behaviour. There are some positive signs that it is working. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced, as has the proportion of pupils who are removed from lessons. Although early in the school year, there were no pupils in attendance at the behaviour unit. The conduct of the vast majority of pupils is calm and orderly, in lessons and around the school site. Most wear their uniform smartly and are punctual to lessons.

However, instances of low-level disruption continue to occur in some lessons. Pupils told inspectors that this depends on which teacher they have. Inspectors' visits to lessons confirmed pupils' views. Not all staff use the behaviour policy well enough to reinforce their expectations. Some set work that is too easy, and pupils get

distracted. Sometimes pupils lack the knowledge they need to complete the learning tasks successfully and this, too, leads to low-level disruption.

Overall, pupils' attitudes towards their learning are improving. They present their work well and take greater pride in it. Most pupils who spoke to inspectors reported that the school is generally a pleasant place to be. They feel safe in school. They told inspectors that incidences of bullying are lower than has been the case in the past. They feel more confident that, with a more stable staff, any issues would be sorted out quickly. However, pupils also presented mixed views about how rapidly the school is improving.

Leaders have recently recruited Year 11 prefects to support further improvements in behaviour and inclusion. Pupils were happy at being appointed to these roles and appreciated the responsibility for supporting leadership. However, it is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative.

Attendance is not improving rapidly enough. Despite a range of strategies implemented by leaders, overall absence remains above the national average. The proportion of pupils regularly absent from school remains stubbornly high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are monitoring attendance more closely than in the past. There are signs that the strategies leaders are implementing to improve attendance are having a positive impact at key stage 4. Leaders recognise that they need to be as robust with these strategies at key stage 3 where rates of persistent absence have increased over the last school year.

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

The previous school year was negatively affected by significant and sustained turbulence in staffing, particularly in science. Leaders have improved the school's leadership capacity and stabilised its staff. The school's senior leadership team is now in a stable position. The executive headteacher and head of school are a unified team, fostering a shared culture of belief and cooperation, underpinned by high expectations. They have brought about a renewed energy and determination to rapidly improve standards at the school and, consequently, the pace of improvement is accelerating. With the support of the trust, they have improved the school environment. They have ensured suitable accommodation for theoretical and practical music lessons and a new inclusion base for pupils with SEND. The number of pupils applying for places at the school has also increased compared to the previous two years.

Despite the challenges that the school faces, particularly with many new subject leaders, leaders' actions have instilled a sense of optimism about the future of the school. Staff who spoke with inspectors say that the culture and ethos of the school have become more positive. Staff morale is very high, and there is a strong sense of 'togetherness' in the improvement journey that the school is on. Senior leaders have



further developed the whole-school improvement plan, which has clear milestones by which to measure success. It is too soon in the new school year, however, to evaluate fully the sustained impact of the new plan.

Senior leaders now work more closely with subject leaders than has been the case in the past. They have improved the line management and quality assurance processes to hold subject leaders to account for the quality of education and pupils' achievement. The new structure and staffing are at a very early stage of implementation, but staff are positive about the changes.

The leadership of pupils with SEND continues to strengthen. The inclusion base is a welcoming space for pupils with SEND. Staff have a strong knowledge and understanding of individual needs and contexts, particularly for those pupils who have education, health and care plans. They work effectively with external agencies and parents to meet complex needs. As a consequence, these pupils are making more secure progress than has been the case in previous years. Leaders are aware, however, that they need to ensure that the progress made by pupils with SEND is checked more regularly across all subjects.

Leaders now have better oversight of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and clearer understanding of the barriers to learning that these pupils may face. Leaders have developed a range of strategies to help pupils overcome these barriers. They have appointed a mentor to provide closer support for disadvantaged pupils. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils shows some improvement although leaders recognise that there is still a way to go.

Governors have received significant training since the previous inspection. They now understand their strategic role and the importance of holding senior leaders to account. Governors know the school's development priorities. They challenge leaders, for example about pupil attendance and subject performance. They have established formal links with leaders across the school to support their evaluation of the school's provision.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective. The culture of the school is characterised by a strong commitment to the most vulnerable pupils, and staff are alert to any potential risks. Records are well maintained, and leaders work well with parents and other agencies to protect children. Leaders ensure that staff, including those new to the school, are well trained using up-to-date guidance.