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9 January 2020

Naomi Wood  
Headteacher  
Middleton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Moor Flatts Road  
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West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Wood

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Middleton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school's approach to managing behaviour enables pupils to learn without disruption. Leaders should also ensure that the reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions of pupils from school, seen this half-term, continues
- ensure that all the necessary checks are always made on any provider of alternative education used by the school
- confirm the new arrangements for governance and ensure that the new governing body holds leaders to account for the quality of education provided by the school
- improve the skills of curriculum leaders by providing them with subject-specific training so that they can check more effectively on the implementation of the

curriculum

- ensure that curriculum plans are clear about the substantive and disciplinary knowledge that pupils must learn and remember
- make sure that teachers use assessment effectively to address pupils' misconceptions and ensure that pupils remember the most crucial aspects of their learning.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with the designated senior leader for child protection and the attendance leader. I reviewed the school's single central record of checks made on adults working at the school. I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement advisor from the local authority and the local authority designated officer for child protection. I also held a telephone conversation with the headteacher from Reach Primary Learning Centre, which is the alternative education provider used by the school.

I examined a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, a sample of minutes of governing body meetings, attendance and behaviour records, and curriculum plans. I met with four members of the governing body.

We visited some lessons together. I also talked to pupils in lessons and looked at their work. I held a formal meeting with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6. I met with curriculum leaders for English, phonics, mathematics, history and geography, and design and technology. I also talked to some parents and carers at the end of the school day.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, a new joint leader for mathematics and a new English leader have been appointed. The senior leadership team has reduced from three assistant headteachers to two. Three new teachers have been appointed. The deputy headteacher will leave the school at the end of this term.

## **Main findings**

The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not been addressed effectively. Staffing instability and a lack of leadership capacity has hindered improvement. Staffing is now more stable. However, there is still a need to increase capacity in leadership across the school to ensure that swift action is taken to make the necessary improvements.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have prioritised improving the reading curriculum. Leaders have selected class texts linked to subject topics. Adults read to

pupils at the end of each day. Leaders have prioritised the development of pupils' vocabulary. Teachers provide pupils with vocabulary lists at the start of each topic. However, pupils are not clear about what some of the main concepts mean. They get confused about the meaning of main vocabulary and concepts in some subjects. There is a lack of opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills in subjects other than English. For example, pupils have limited opportunities to learn about different historical interpretations, or access extended texts in history. Pupils have not achieved well in their national tests in reading at the end of key stage 1 and 2 for the last three years.

The curriculum is not ambitious enough. The work given to pupils is not demanding enough. Teachers are not using assessment effectively to address the gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills quickly enough. Consequently, pupils do not remember the most important aspects of their work. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should and can achieve are still too variable across the curriculum.

Curriculum leaders have received training since the previous inspection to develop the curriculum. They have checked that curriculum plans cover the scope of the national curriculum. Nonetheless, leaders are not clear enough about the crucial components that pupils must know and should not be forgotten. Leaders are not checking effectively on the implementation of the curriculum. Leaders have not made sure that links are made between one topic and the next. Pupils have limited opportunities to review and revisit their learning so that they remember more over time. The quality of pupils' work remains too variable.

Since the last inspection, leaders have focused on the implementation of the school's phonics programme. In Reception, adults make sure that children practise their reading from books that are well-matched to their phonics knowledge. Adults are trained well to teach the school's phonics programme. Leaders make sure that the weakest readers are supported to catch up quickly. The school runs workshops for parents so that they can support their children at home. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils are passing the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1.

There are still too few children who achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception. Leaders acknowledge that improving the quality of education in the early years remains a main priority for the school.

Pupils told me that there has been some improvement in behaviour since the previous inspection. However, their learning is still affected by low-level disruption from a significant minority of pupils. Pupils' behaviour in lessons deteriorates in the afternoon. The number of behaviour incidents remains high. The proportion of pupils excluded from school increased last half-term but has since declined. Pupils' behaviour is not improving swiftly enough.

At the time of the monitoring inspection, plans were in place to reconstitute the governing body. Currently, governors have an over-optimistic view about the effect

of actions taken by the school since the last inspection. They do not hold leaders effectively to account to improve the quality of education.

The school uses an alternative education provider. Leaders visit this provider every week and checks are made daily on the attendance of their pupils. Although leaders had made checks on the alternative education provider, these checks were not thorough enough. Leaders ensured that this was addressed during the inspection.

### **External support**

The external support the school has received to improve the implementation of the school's phonics programme is leading to improvements in pupils' reading fluency. The local authority has provided support for the school since the previous inspection. However, this support has not led to marked improvements. The school needs more support and leadership capacity to make the necessary improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**