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9 March 2020

Mr Ian Rumbelow  
Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mr Rumbelow

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 February 2020, 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 March 2019.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2019**

- Urgently improve the quality of leadership and management, by ensuring that:
  - leaders develop effective plans for improvement and systems that enable governors to check regularly upon all areas of school performance
  - leaders and governors set high expectations for the achievement of pupils and that governors closely monitor and challenge any underperformance
  - expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised across the school
  - the leadership skills of middle leaders are developed so that they have the capacity to drive improvement
  - the monitoring of teaching is precise and sets clear priorities for improvement
  - all staff have training in the 'Prevent' duty and can identify the early signs that may indicate that pupils are at risk of radicalisation
  - relationships with parents are strengthened so that collectively they can work with the school to support rapid improvement.
- Urgently improve pupils' achievement so that all pupils, including the most able, make the progress needed to reach their full potential.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by making sure that:
  - teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve in every key stage, including early years
  - teachers use assessment information and knowledge of what pupils can already do to maximise progress from pupils' starting points
  - teaching rapidly improves pupils' understanding and correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar so that their writing improves
  - teachers provide opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematics through reasoning and problem-solving activities.
- Swiftly improve personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - eradicating any incidents of low-level disruption during learning
  - ensuring good conduct when pupils are moving around the school
  - developing a culture of resilience and high expectations
  - ensuring that pupils have a positive attitude to learning.
- Rapidly increase the effectiveness of the early years provision, by:

- improving the learning environment to ensure that high-quality, continuous provision is in place that enables children to develop their skills fully
- making accurate assessments of what children can do and then planning purposeful learning activities that build progressively on previous learning.

An external review of 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 25 February 2020**

### **Evidence**

The inspector carried out lesson visits to phonics, English and mathematics. She looked at pupils' work and observed pupils reading. She also scrutinised leaders' plans for improvement, minutes of governors' meetings and visit notes from external advisers. She met with the headteacher to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. She met with class teachers, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and three members of the governing body. She also spoke with a representative from the local authority and with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection in March 2019, there have been changes to the leadership and teaching staff of the school. A new teacher for the Reception and key stage 1 class started in January 2020. The current headteacher, who is also the headteacher of a school in the same federation, has been in post since April 2019. The governing body stepped down in November 2019 following a review of governance. A small group of governors is in place during the transition period as the school moves towards joining an academy trust. There have been delays in this process, but it is due to happen in the coming months.

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

The headteacher has changed the strategy for teaching phonics. There is now an organised structure in place. Leaders aim to develop pupils' phonic skills and knowledge. This approach is in its early days. Recent assessments show alarming gaps in some pupils' phonic understanding. Leaders and staff are aware of the urgency needed to ensure that these pupils catch up as quickly as possible.

Children in early years are getting off to a better start. The newly appointed leader for early years ensures that learning areas are better organised and resourced. However, there is not enough clarity about the learning that will take place within each area and the support that children need. Similarly, the outside area is now better arranged and organised, but there are no clear links to learning within the activities set up. In addition, some staff do not have the knowledge needed to correct children's errors. For example, some children showed a weak pencil grip, which was not corrected by staff. This carries a risk that children may develop poor writing skills that are hard to remedy in the future.

There has been heavy investment in reading across the school. This is now better organised to ensure that pupils are reading appropriately challenging books. Most pupils enjoy their reading times during the day. They are also motivated by the

storytimes provided by staff and people in the community. Some pupils who need to catch up with their reading need books that are even more closely matched to the phonics they already know.

There is a new approach to the teaching of writing. Pupils learn stories and adapt them over a series of lessons. This helps them to write at length and with confidence. This approach is being refined and improved so that learning is more linked and makes more sense to pupils, and it also improves in quality over time. However, there is not an overarching plan showing when pupils will learn different types of writing across the school.

In mathematics, there is more clarity about what pupils will learn and when. A consistent approach is now in place. Some issues remain in the development of mathematics. For example, pupils develop their number knowledge well over time, but do not use these skills as well as they could to solve problems and deepen their knowledge.

The SENCo has not yet started her training for the role. However, she has recognised and tackled some key weaknesses. Individual plans are now more precise, with clearer targets for improvement. Staff can use these plans to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make important next steps. However, pupils' books show that these more meaningful targets are not translating into successfully adapted work. Therefore, some pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they could.

The headteacher has introduced frequent meetings with teachers where the progress that pupils make is discussed and challenged. This is starting to ensure that staff have a more accurate understanding of what pupils can do and need to achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved since the previous inspection. New awards, clearer rules and more celebrations of successes help to drive a positive, consistent approach. Pupils pay attention, work hard and listen during lessons. They show respect for each other and adults around them. During reading lessons, many pupils read confidently alongside their peers, discussing their reading strategies as they do so. Pupils move around the school calmly and play together well during lunchtimes. Attendance is improving as pupils like school and want to be there.

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

The headteacher has an accurate view of what needs to be done to make the improvements that are needed. Staff and the school community are positive about the changes. Morale is improving, and staff say that they are proud to work at the school. Teachers contribute to the school's development plan and say that this helps them to be part of the improvements. Staff report that the focus on sharing

improvements, not only in Shepton Beauchamp but also in partnership with the federated school, means that they are optimistic for the future.

Parents say that they notice the improvements. Many expressed confidence in the new leadership and the changes they see. Parents appreciate the attempts made to communicate more widely and to draw them into the school. Successful open events mean that parents are more involved. The school continues to attract families across the local community and pupil numbers are steadily rising.

The headteacher is building leadership roles, using expertise across the two schools. This is at an early stage, but already staff have clearer responsibilities and are now providing better support to their colleagues.

The headteacher has rightly prioritised improvements to the core subjects. He frequently provides detailed feedback to staff about the quality of learning taking place in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff meetings provide clear messages to staff about how to improve pupils' learning. Staff say that this helps them to continue to raise expectations and improve the quality of education. Staff and governors have also benefited from safeguarding training, particularly about the signs of radicalisation.

Governors, now a very small group, know the school very well through their continued presence in and around the school. Although minutes of their meetings do not clearly demonstrate challenge and rigour, governors are in fact very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The headteacher leads with determination and clarity. His structured approach to improvement is raising expectations across the school.
- The school has been successful in improving partnership working with parents.
- The consistent approach to improving pupils' behaviour has paid off. Pupils show better attitudes towards each other and towards their learning.
- Improvements to assessment mean that staff have a clearer picture of what pupils know and understand.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Curriculum plans for most subjects are not yet in place, including in writing.
- Some pupils have significant gaps in their learning. Although these have now been identified, there has not been enough time yet to reduce these gaps. For example, in Year 1, too many children are not where they should be in their phonics. Teachers do not ensure that the work for pupils with SEND is closely matched to their needs and targets for improvement. More needs to be done to

ensure that staff are able to notice when they need to support pupils' learning, particularly for children in Reception.

- Governors, while well intended and well informed, are not able to demonstrate that they have a rigorous approach in holding leaders to account for improvements.
- There has been an element of frustration among leaders as the school has not yet moved to become a sponsored academy, despite several expected dates for this coming and going. The sooner this can be resolved, the better.

### **External support**

The school values the support provided by the local diocese school adviser. Also, some useful advice has been provided by the academy trust that the school is hoping to join. The local authority, working in collaboration with a local multi-academy trust (MAT), ensured that the current headteacher came to the school as soon as the previous leader left. This allowed the process of improvement to begin straight away. However, governors and leaders are frustrated about how long the transition to becoming an academy is taking. The headteacher has not waited at all: he is determined to make the changes needed to improve the school. However, the delay has meant that certain key decisions have not been made, for example on the establishment of a substantive governing body or the appointment of a substantive headteacher.