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26 May 2021

Chris Read  
Interim Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Read

**Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Bishop's Church of England Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Damian Loneragan and Charlie Fordham, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), to your school on 5 and 6 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.**

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

**The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.**

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT), the director of education for the Diocese of Norwich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 May 2021 to 6 May 2021**

### **Context**

Since the previous section 5 inspection, the headteacher has left the school. A headteacher has been appointed by the academy trust on an interim basis. The vice-chair of the governing body became the chair in January 2021. The school has experienced some instability following staffing changes due to maternity leave.

The school received a monitoring visit in November 2020 led by two HMI which focused on how leaders were managing the return to full education for pupils, following the COVID-19 pandemic. It also received an additional, remote monitoring inspection in February 2021, led by two HMI. Inspectors judged that leaders and those responsible for governance were taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

### **The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation**

The headteacher and other leaders have led improvements and added much needed stability to the school. Leaders show a clear understanding of the progress being made in resolving the issues raised in the previous inspection, and what needs improving further. The headteacher has the full support of trustees and staff. Parents who responded during the inspection commented favourably on the changes that are taking place.

Senior leaders have rightly prioritised improving the curriculum. Teachers made good use of time during lockdown to revise curriculum planning in English and mathematics. Leaders of foundation subjects also worked together to revise plans for topic-based learning. Better quality curriculum plans are in place but senior leaders have not had enough time to 'road-test' them fully to see if they lead to improvement. Staffing changes and the disruption to education caused by the pandemic have slowed plans to implement a curriculum that fully engages all pupils and enables them to achieve well.

The teaching of early reading is established. Visits to lessons in the early years and key stage 1 confirmed that all staff use the same resources to teach phonics. Training, support and advice from leaders of early reading ensures that this is carried out systematically. Pupils are assessed regularly to gauge how well they are doing, and to identify which of them need additional support.

This systematic approach has recently been extended into Year 3 classes to support those pupils who were unable to read well enough by the end of key stage 1. These pupils now have a daily phonics session and weekly one-to-one reading support with a teaching assistant. These arrangements are new this year. Inspectors who

listened to pupils read noted that some of them continue to struggle to read fluently. More needs to be done to ensure that they secure the reading skills they need.

Elsewhere in key stage 2, reading remains under-developed. Gains have been made in revising curriculum plans and implementing new resources to teach pupils how to learn to read in an enjoyable way. Not all staff have the knowledge they need to use these resources effectively. More time is needed to see whether this approach leads to sustained improvement. Leaders acknowledge that the teaching and assessment of reading will need to be monitored closely this year.

Improvements planned in mathematics have also slowed during the pandemic. However, revised planning and regular training for staff is providing them with a clearer understanding of teaching the subject. There is growing consistency in teaching mathematics in both key stages. New assessment procedures are helping to identify which pupils have gaps in their learning and to inform what needs to be taught again.

Improvement plans aim to raise the achievement of all pupils, especially after the recent period of disruption they faced. This includes disadvantaged pupils who often have the same gaps in their learning as other pupils do. Links have been forged with a school in another part of the country to enable staff to visit and learn from their approach to raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding is being used effectively to provide additional pastoral staff who liaise with the families of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that pupils attend school and receive suitable support in lessons.

In foundation subjects, curriculum plans have been amended to provide staff with a clearer overview of how links can be made between subjects during topic work taught in the afternoons. However, several subjects, learning is not organised so that pupils can build upon what they already know and can do, or study in sufficient depth. Some learning listed in the planning is not taught, or is repeated the following year. Pupils often complete a series of tasks that are unrelated to each other and do not help pupils to remember what was taught previously.

Senior leaders have recognised that more pupils need additional support. The register of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has grown in size since the previous inspection and a higher proportion of pupils now have an education health and care (EHC) plan. These plans are shared with teachers so that they have the information they need to ensure that pupils with SEND are able to learn effectively in lessons.

A small proportion of pupils with SEND who regularly display very challenging behaviour are now receiving the support they need. The behaviour of these pupils and others who regularly disrupt learning remains a significant barrier to effective learning. Senior leaders and the trust are committed to keeping these pupils

engaged in education. Short-term arrangements are in place for six of them to be taught off-site in alternative provision for part of the week. Daily checks are made to ensure that they remain safe. Senior leaders anticipate that a new facility proposed for the school later this year will enable these to return to full-time education on the school site.

Most other pupils behave themselves and adhere to the school's behaviour policy. Pupils told inspectors that in lessons most pupils behave well but a few pupils spoil things for others. They feel safe in school and said that if they have concerns about bullying staff will always help them to resolve it. Increasingly, staff are using the school's six core values to instil greater responsibility and respect for others, and to promote pupils' personal development. However, pupils still have a limited understanding of people from different cultures. Leaders aim to develop this further through educational visits and events later this year.

The school's safeguarding arrangements remain effective. Overall attendance improved last year. Almost all pupils have returned to school. Pastoral staff continue to work with parents and carers to encourage a small minority of pupils who are often absent back into school.

### **Additional support**

An improvement board implemented by the trust meets monthly. This enables trustees and governors to monitor improvements made and to hold the headteacher and other leaders to account. Minutes of meetings show that they provide the headteacher with suitable support and challenge. The trust is working jointly with the local authority to improve the teaching of mathematics. A programme of regular training for staff started earlier this year continues for the rest of the term.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with senior and middle leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff, and two groups of pupils. They observed pupils reading aloud to staff. They met with a representative of the DNEAT multi-academy trust and held an online meeting with trustees, including the CEO and the chair of governors. They also held a telephone conversation with a trustee.