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26 May 2021

Katherine Stephenson and Jill O'Dell  
Joint Acting Headteachers  
Tritlington Church of England First School  
Tritlington  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 3DU

Dear Mrs Stephenson and Mrs O'Dell

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tritlington Church of England First School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 2021, 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(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- plan and sequence subjects more meticulously in terms of the specific knowledge, content and vocabulary that children and pupils are expected to know and remember as they move through the school.

## **Context**

There has been a great deal of turbulence in terms of senior leadership since the previous inspection. Along with the impact of COVID-19, this has affected the pace of improvement. The previous headteacher left in June 2019. Since then, three acting headteachers have supported the school in succession.

At present, greater stability in terms of staffing is making a positive difference for pupils. The current joint acting headteachers took up their positions in September 2020. All pupils and staff are back on site following a period of change and disruption to education due to COVID-19.

Following the previous inspection, the governing body disbanded. An interim executive board (IEB) was established in January 2020. Owing to the impact of COVID-19, the board has remained in place longer than the intended year. However, plans to maintain a stable future for the school and a new governing body are now well on the way.

## **Main findings**

Leaders are proud of this small school and the unique, welcoming Christian ethos that they have established. Pupils' best interests are at the heart of their plans for improvement and any changes they make.

Leaders have worked closely with the IEB and parents and carers. They have developed trust and collaboration among the school's local community. Leaders understand the importance of close, positive school and home partnership. Work to consult parents and involve them in their child's learning has developed well. Consequently, adults work in harmony to the benefit of pupils.

Leaders value the opinions of teachers and support staff. They have a positive regard for adults' well-being. Staff feel respected. Staff training is aptly focused on school development priorities, such as pupils' speech and language development and phonics. Staff appreciate these training opportunities. Expertise is building.

Leaders have made great strides in developing procedures for identifying, helping and managing pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff draw effectively on parents' knowledge of their child. They liaise well with specialists such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. Pupils therefore get the right support at the right time. Parents agree. One parent commented, 'Staff are extremely supportive and helpful in every possible way. There is fantastic communication and a constant exchange of ideas.'

An enriched curriculum experience for pupils is provided by school leaders. They have sought alternatives and solutions where COVID-19 restrictions have hampered activities. Visitors and experts contribute to pupils' experiences. For example, in

music, some pupils are learning guitar, keyboard and/or violin. The Little Foodies enrichment club offers cooking experiences and nutritional information for children from Nursery through to pupils in Year 4. Links with the local church remain strong.

Leaders understand the importance of reading for pupils' future success. They promote a love of reading. Pupils read books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Pupils practise phonics and reading on a daily basis. Adults help pupils to know what they are doing well in terms of their reading, and what needs further practice. Pupils who need extra support receive it.

Leaders are taking action to improve the quality of the school's curriculum. In collaboration with other school leaders, they are identifying the key vocabulary and knowledge that they want pupils to learn in some subjects. However, this work has been hindered by the impact of COVID-19 and frequent changes in leadership. Leaders know that subjects beyond reading, writing, mathematics and science need greater attention. Their plans do not show clearly enough what pupils are expected to know, be able to do and remember from one year to the next. Subject-specific detail is missing. The most important subject content is not made explicit or sequenced coherently from early years onwards. As a result, prior knowledge is not built upon as well, or as consistently, as it might be.

### **Additional support**

The local authority and the IEB have held school leaders to account. Their input has enabled improvements to be made to the provision for pupils with SEND, the early reading curriculum, including phonics, and aspects of mathematics and science. Leaders welcome challenge and respond diligently to advice that makes a positive difference for pupils.

Leaders feel well supported by external partners, including colleagues from the Morpeth partnership. They feel that this allows sharing of good practice and educational ideas, and helps pupils to make positive transitions from first to middle school. Leaders said that such support is helping to shape their thinking and plans for improving the curriculum.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the joint acting headteachers, support staff, members of the IEB and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also had a telephone conversation with the headteacher of the pupil referral unit used by the school.

I listened to pupils reading with adults in school, scrutinised documentation such as improvement and curriculum plans, and checked responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**