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Karen Wood
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Wood

Special measures monitoring inspection of Micklefield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit with Marcus Newby, Her Majesty's Inspector (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 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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 managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

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

The school's improvement plan is not 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 York, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Watt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 May 2021 and 6 May 2021

Context

Since the previous inspection in July 2019, there have been significant changes in senior leadership. Many of these changes are recent. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in January 2021. The substantive headteacher's absence has been covered by an interim headteacher since 19 April 2021. Two teaching assistants have left the school. The teaching staff have remained stable. Since the last section 5 inspection, the governing body and the local authority have actively engaged with academies with the view to conversion.

Prior to March 2020, leaders were in the process of reviewing the school's curriculum plans. This work was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Planned support from local English and mathematics hubs was postponed because of the national restrictions.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the last inspection, the pace of change has not been swift enough. Although leaders have taken some steps to improve the teaching of early reading and phonics, most of the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection have not been addressed. There has been a lack of effective leadership. Leaders have not focused on the right things. Therefore, leaders have not taken effective action to secure the necessary improvement.

Governors and senior leaders have not taken the necessary steps to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective across the school. Governors have not acted with sufficient urgency on the recommendations from an external safeguarding review conducted by the local authority. Governors are failing to fulfil their statutory responsibilities to ensure arrangements are suitable to keep pupils safe.

There is a poor safeguarding culture in the school. In some instances, leaders have not made child protection referrals to other agencies when pupils have been at risk of harm. Leaders have not worked closely enough with external agencies to ensure that pupils are protected from harm. This means that some pupils have not received timely help to keep them safe.

Leaders have not ensured that the early years welfare requirements are met, particularly in relation to safety and the organisation of the premises. Necessary actions identified in the recent fire risk assessment have not been followed up.

School leaders carry out appropriate checks when recruiting new staff. However, checks that have been undertaken on staff and governors are not consistently

recorded in a single central register, as defined in the Department for Education statutory guidance.

A few parents expressed concerns about their children's safety. Despite the shortcomings in safeguarding arrangements, pupils told inspectors that there is always someone they can talk to if they have a problem. Pupils feel well supported. Those pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe at school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Because of this, they have not identified which areas of the school's performance should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The school's improvement plan makes links to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, the plan is not precise enough about the impact leaders expect to see or how success is to be measured. This means that leaders' accountability is unclear.

Leaders have taken action to improve some aspects of the quality of education. However, some areas of the school's work have been ignored for too long. For example, leaders have not identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember in subjects such as modern foreign languages, computing, and design and technology. Pupils are not developing their knowledge and skills well enough in these subjects.

Leaders have taken steps to improve early reading and phonics. The English leader is working with specialist teachers from a local English hub. Leaders have introduced a new phonics programme. Staff have received training. However, some staff do not implement the training effectively. This means that some pupils who struggle with learning to read are not catching up as quickly as they should.

Since the previous inspection, the subject leader has worked with specialist teachers to develop the mathematics curriculum. As a result, there is an improved mathematics curriculum that is carefully planned and well sequenced.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is weak. Leaders do not have a clear system in place for identifying individual pupils' needs. Leaders have not checked that staff have the necessary skills to ensure pupils with SEND receive the right support. As a result, staff have not been provided with the training they need to ensure they can support pupils effectively.

Too many pupils continue to be regularly absent from school. More recently, leaders have started to place greater emphasis on the importance of pupils attending school every day. Leaders are beginning to put strategies in place to check on and improve pupils' attendance. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

Since the last inspection, serious behaviour incidents have increased. Leaders have not taken action to reduce incidents of poor behaviour quickly enough. A more recent focus on the school's expectations has provided clearer guidance to pupils on how to behave in school. Pupils appreciate the recent changes introduced by the new interim headteacher. Pupils know what is expected of them and others since the introduction of the new behaviour policy. However, it is too soon to see the lasting impact of these early actions by leaders.

Governors do not assure themselves of the accuracy of information shared with them by leaders. They have not challenged leaders well enough on the areas that need to improve. The new chair of the governing body has quickly identified the areas in need of rapid improvement.

Staff feel supported by leaders and are confident that leaders consider their workload. Staff appreciate the professional development they have received.

The school should take further action to:

- Urgently address weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements, including ensuring that appropriate action is taken where pupils are at risk of harm. Leaders should also ensure that an accurate record is maintained of checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils.

Additional support

Recently, the local authority carried out a review of the school which identified a range of safeguarding concerns. The local authority is working with leaders and governors to implement the recommendations from the review.

A local English hub has provided support to improve the teaching of early reading and phonics. This is beginning to improve teachers' knowledge and skills in how to teach children to read fluently.

Specialist staff from the local authority have provided support to improve the provision for pupils with SEND. However, improvements in SEND provision are limited. The special educational needs coordinator and other staff require training to help them to provide the right support for pupils with SEND.

Evidence

During the inspection, inspectors met with the interim headteacher, the assistant headteacher, teaching and support staff and the school's business manager. An inspector reviewed the school's single central register of checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Inspectors held discussions with representatives of those responsible for governance and held video calls with representatives of the diocese and the local authority.

Inspectors, scrutinised documents, including the school's improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings, behaviour and attendance records and curriculum plans. Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's surveys completed by parents and staff. The inspection team visited lessons, examined a sample of pupils' mathematics books, observed pupils reading to adults and met with a group of pupils from across year groups.