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Emma Cook
Interim Headteacher
Micklefield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Cook

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 November 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second 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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing 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 towards the removal of special measures.

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

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

The school may appoint early career 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 second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 November 2021

Context

Since the most recent monitoring visit in May 2021, the number of pupils on roll has decreased notably. Because of this, there has been a reduction in the number of classes. There have been significant changes in senior leadership. Following the resignation of the substantive headteacher, an interim headteacher has been leading the school since September 2021. A temporary early years teacher has been appointed. In August 2021, the local authority established an interim executive board (IEB).

COVID-19 has had an impact on some aspects of leaders' actions to further improve the school. Some teachers have been unable to receive planned face-to-face training. As a result, some work to improve the quality of education has been delayed. Even so, leaders have a renewed sense of urgency to bring about rapid and sustained improvements.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

The interim headteacher and the IEB are highly ambitious for the school. They have a clear vision for what needs to be done to improve this school. They have taken the necessary action to secure a stable leadership team with the expertise needed to swiftly improve the school. The local authority has implemented a 'team around the school', which includes many school improvement professionals. They are providing support and challenge to school leaders based on the school's most pressing priorities. This is enabling those responsible for governance to effectively hold leaders to account.

The interim headteacher has rightly prioritised improving safeguarding procedures, early reading and improving the early years provision.

Safeguarding arrangements are now effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders' recruitment checks on the suitability of adults are robust and timely. Staff have received essential safeguarding training. Additionally, they receive weekly updates to their safeguarding knowledge. Safeguarding policies and practices are clear and well understood. Staff are vigilant. They check that pupils are safe. They report concerns swiftly. Leaders act quickly to address any concerns that may arise to ensure pupils and families receive the help they need. Leaders keep meticulous records of their actions. Governors have a strong oversight of safeguarding within the school. They make rigorous checks on the suitability of safeguarding arrangements.

Senior leaders have put reading at the heart of the curriculum. The curriculum for reading and phonics continues to improve. Leaders are passionate and determined to develop pupils' love of reading. Leaders have invested in a wide range of new reading books for pupils to read. They have created many inviting reading areas within the school. Pupils read daily in school. When the inspector asked pupils if they get time to read with adults in school, they eagerly responded, 'Lots!' Pupils enjoy reading. The impact of leaders' actions to raise the profile of reading across the school is evident.

The reading leader works closely with specialist teachers from a local English hub. Staff have received training in the school's chosen phonics programme. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 receive daily phonics sessions. Adults have identified where pupils are not securely grasping the letters and sounds they should know. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils learn. Pupils who need extra help with reading receive appropriate support. This helps them to catch up quickly.

Leaders have taken effective actions to improve some aspects of the quality of education. This is the case in mathematics. Leaders have designed a well-planned, sequenced and ambitious curriculum, starting in the early years. High-quality staff training has increased teachers' subject knowledge. As a result, pupils are knowing and remembering more in mathematics. This term, additional mathematics sessions and the introduction of a 'mastery numbers' programme are helping pupils to be more secure in their knowledge of number facts. Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics. They enjoy mathematics.

In other subjects, such as art and design and technology, curriculum plans are less well developed. Plans in these subjects do not clearly identify the important knowledge and skills that pupils must acquire over time in a logical order. Leaders are considering how to manage delivering their planned sequence of learning within mixed-age classes so that pupils do not miss crucial building blocks or encounter them in the incorrect order.

Leaders have made many improvements to the early years provision. Swift action has been taken by the early years teacher to establish clear routines. Children are well settled. They excitedly follow the routines. There is a stronger focus on developing children's communication, language and mathematical skills. Early reading is improving. Most children are beginning to successfully decode and blend letters. However, there remains some variation in the teaching of phonics in the early years. Some staff need further training so that they can deliver phonics consistently well.

Improving pupils' attendance continues to be a priority for the school. Leaders promote high levels of attendance. They have introduced rewards, such as 'stars of the week', for pupils whose attendance is high or improving. Pupils value these incentives. Leaders meticulously track and monitor attendance. Immediate action is taken if pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders engage with parents when a pupil's attendance starts to decline. Still, attendance remains too low. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to take further actions to send a clear message about the importance of attending school regularly.

Behaviour has improved significantly. Parents, staff and pupils agree. There is a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. As a result, there is a calm and orderly atmosphere. There has been a reduction in the number of instances of poor behaviour. In the lessons visited, pupils were eager to learn. At social times, pupils play well together. They demonstrate the school's Christian values. They know the importance of being kind to each other. Pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour receive appropriate support.

School leaders are well supported by the IEB. Members of the IEB are knowledgeable and well informed about the improvements being made in relation to curriculum development and whole-school improvements. They know what school leaders need to do to develop further the quality of education. Members of the IEB are attentive of staff's well-being and workload, including that of the headteacher.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the extensive professional development they receive. They are fully committed to making the necessary improvements to ensure pupils in their care receive the best possible education. Staff morale is high.

Additional support

The local authority and the diocese continue to provide well-organised support to school leaders and staff. The local authority has brokered extensive support, including a 'team around the school'. This involves a wide range of improvement professionals, who provide joined-up, targeted support for the school. A local English and mathematics hub has provided valuable support to improve the teaching of early reading and mathematics. This has improved teachers' subject knowledge of both the teaching of phonics and mathematics.

The school improvement advisers have carried out rigorous monitoring and review of the impact of the support. They regularly check on the progress the school is making. They provide a high degree of challenge and support to school leaders and the IEB. This is helping to bring about rapid improvements in some areas, such as safeguarding, early reading and mathematics.

Evidence

The inspector held video calls with the interim headteacher, met with the assistant headteacher, teaching and support staff and the school's business manager. The inspector also held discussions with representatives of those responsible for governance and held video calls with representatives of the diocese and the local authority.

The inspector scrutinised documents, including the school's improvement plan, minutes from governors' meetings, the school's single central record, behaviour and attendance records and curriculum plans. The inspector visited lessons and met with a group of pupils from across year groups. The inspector also considered 13 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

The inspector spoke to parents as they brought their children to school and considered the four responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.