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Emma Cook
Interim Headteacher
Micklefield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Great North Road
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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 February 2022, 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 third 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 third 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:

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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 interim executive board, 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

Andrea Batley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 10 February 2022

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the interim headteacher has continued to make improvements where they are needed in the school. An academy sponsor has now been identified, and there are plans for the school to join the Collaborative Learning Trust in Spring 2022. The interim executive board (IEB) remains in place. A permanent early years leader has been appointed.

COVID-19 has impacted heavily on the school since the last monitoring inspection. Staff from right across the school have had periods of absence due to COVID-19. This led to the school having to close for a short period of time. These absences and school closures have meant that plans to improve the wider curriculum have been delayed. However, new leaders show determination to embed recent improvements, to the teaching of reading and safeguarding, with rigour and determination.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

In recent months, the school has faced challenges, due to difficulties with securing an academy sponsor. There has also been a number of changes to the senior leadership of the school, following the previous headteacher leaving. However, the recently appointed interim headteacher is now working closely with the interim executive board and the local authority to implement improvements for the future.

Parents value the 'warm family feel' that the school has. They particularly appreciate the clear communication systems new leaders have put in and look forward to seeing the positive changes continuing. They recognise the care that new leaders and staff give to the pupils and say that this helps their children to feel settled and learn successfully in the school.

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, the recently appointed interim headteacher was focusing on improving reading, safeguarding and the early years provision. This work is now having a positive impact as the changes become embedded.

Safeguarding is now a strength of the school. The systems and processes introduced, prior to the last inspection, are robust and effective. Staff understand the risks that pupils face in the local area or online and report concerns swiftly and clearly. Leaders ensure that record-keeping is detailed, and actions are timely. They work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils are safe.

Leaders identified reading as central to improving the quality of education in the school. They have continued to work with the reading hub to improve the profile of reading in the school. Book areas are warm and welcoming. Pupils are positive about the opportunities that they have to borrow books from the 'little book hut' or gain rewards for reading regularly at home. Leaders are communicating more effectively with parents about the

raised expectations around reading. However, a small number of pupils still do not read regularly at home. Leaders are identifying ways they can support parents further to share books with their children.

The teaching of early reading and phonics is strong and effective. Teachers use the newly introduced phonics programme consistently and effectively. Staff's training has ensured that all adults know which sounds pupils are secure with, and which they need to practise further. They can then ensure that pupils have opportunities to read books that match these sounds to develop greater fluency. Pupils across the school showed enthusiasm for reading.

Leaders are proud of the changes made to the early years provision in the school. The environment is warm and welcoming. The newly appointed early years leader is working closely with local authority support to identify how the provision can be best utilised to meet the needs of all the children in the provision. The areas for learning are well planned and orderly. Phonics teaching is skilful and consistent. Children can be seen confidently reading words containing sounds they have been taught. They enjoy the challenge of using what they know to attempt longer words by 'chunking' them up. Leaders are ambitious for the future. They have plans to develop the early years provision in the school through further work with external partners. This will ensure that all staff understand how to plan a progressive curriculum that spans all stages of the provision. This is needed to enable staff to plan activities and experiences which enable children to build on prior learning.

Leaders have ensured that the full range of subjects in the national curriculum is taught across the school. In some areas, such as personal, social and health education and religious education, they have started to identify how they can adapt the planned curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils in the mixed-age classes. However, this is still in the earliest stages of development. In subjects such as geography and history, this work is not yet underway. Learning in these subjects has not yet been adapted or planned to ensure that learning is built progressively over time. Leaders recognise that this is now an urgent priority for the school. They have identified support from external partners to ensure that improvements can be made. Subject leaders need further support to identify the detailed knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This will then support teachers to plan learning to meet all pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, more effectively. This will support all pupils to build knowledge over time in the school.

Pupils spoken to say that they are happy and safe in this school. Behaviour management systems, introduced prior to the previous inspection, are now becoming embedded. Staff use them consistently. Pupils use methods they are taught, such as slow breathing techniques, to regulate their behaviour. They are confident to talk to adults about worries or concerns. Staff help them to understand their feelings, and this helps them to learn more effectively.

Leaders are still focusing on improving attendance in the school. Improved attendance is recognised and celebrated. However, there are still too many pupils not in school on a daily basis. Attendance improved prior to the latest COVID-19 outbreaks. Leaders have relentlessly focused on monitoring and offering support if pupils were not in school. However, these improvements have not been sustained. A number of pupils arrive late in school daily and so miss valuable learning. Leaders are focusing on ensuring that parents have a good understanding of the impact on learning when pupils do not attend punctually and regularly. There is still much to do in this area.

Leaders are starting to develop wider links to the local community. They have ambitious plans to use local knowledge to support the development of learning in the wider curriculum. Links to groups, such as the local history society and the village eco group, are being made and the friends of Micklefield parents' group has been re-established. Parents and pupils value the activities that leaders now plan to enrich the curriculum. Pupils can recall some past visits to places to learn about history or to wildlife centres and are looking forward to future visits.

Leaders, the IEB, parents and pupils are positive about the changes that have been made in the school. There is a relentless focus and determination to find ways to improve further. Staff share this determination and feel that they are well supported to manage their workload. They recognise that there is still much work to do to improve the curriculum but can see the success of the changes made to date. There is a positive air in the school.

Additional support

The 'team around the school' put in place by the local authority continues to provide well organised and effective support for the school. The expertise offered has enabled the school to embed changes to safeguarding practices and the early years provision swiftly. Leaders and staff have utilised the advice offered through the local English and mathematics hub, along with support to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional education and behaviour well. Leaders welcome this support and constantly seek opportunities to develop teachers' and staff's subject knowledge and expertise further.

The local authority is committed to continuing to support the school. They use their regular contact with the school and the IEB to challenge and support leaders to drive further improvement. There is a shared commitment to this school.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the school's leader of special educational needs, two subject leaders, the school's business manager and pupils. Other meetings were held with members of the interim executive board, representatives of the diocese and the local authority. Some of these meetings were held remotely.

The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, as well as speaking to parents as they collected their children from school.