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Tricia Bunn  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Bunn

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of The Nethersole CofE Academy**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 21 September 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November 2021.

During the inspection, Rob Hackfath, His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and I discussed with you and other senior leaders, representatives of the multi-academy trust and governors, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also reviewed the school's single central record, visited lessons and reviewed a range of curriculum documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Nethersole CofE Academy remains inadequate and has serious weaknesses. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.**

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

There have been considerable changes in school leadership since the previous graded inspection. You joined the school as head teacher in March 2022. A new assistant head teacher was appointed in September 2022. There have also been considerable changes to staffing with a large number of new teaching staff starting in September 2022. An

executive governing body was appointed to take over the role of governance in the school following the previous inspection.

On this inspection we focused on the work of governors and the multi-academy trust to clarify and formalise the leadership arrangements in the school, the engagement that leaders have with parents and the stability of staffing. We also looked at the work of leaders to ensure that there is an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum in place that meets the needs of all pupils.

You have established high expectations for staff and pupils since your appointment in March 2022. Together with support from the multi-academy trust and school leaders, you have demonstrated an ambitious and shared commitment to improve the quality of education at the school and drive important improvements across a range of areas. You have further strengthened the leadership team with the appointment of a new assistant headteacher. You have also ensured that leaders have the resource and capacity to support you in driving school improvements. These changes are making a positive difference.

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and areas of focus for the future. Leaders work closely with trust staff to ensure that any planned support aligns closely with the school's improvement plans. Support is utilised in an effective and carefully layered way to ensure that it meets as many areas for improvement as possible without causing confusion or overload for staff. For example, coaching support is in place that will lead on to the development of subject leaders.

One of leaders' key foci has been further strengthening relationships with parents. Leaders operate an open-door policy and are very accessible to families. Communication has been strengthened using technology and through community and social events. Parents value the increased communications and opportunities to build relationships with the school staff. Parents report that since your appointment in March, you have made a very positive impact on the school.

You and your leaders have a clear and comprehensive oversight of curriculum provision. You have a strategic plan for development of subject leadership and improving teacher subject knowledge and understanding of subject specific pedagogy. You have successfully led improvements in curriculum leadership. You plan to share some of this responsibility with curriculum teams and eventually subject leaders. This model considers the significant recent changes in staffing.

Your ambition and clarity of vision has instilled confidence in staff and parents. There are high levels of engagement from staff regarding leaders' aims and ambitions. Staff are ready for the challenge. A wide range of development opportunities are planned for this year. Staff are very positive and have engaged well with the training to date and are starting to implement these new approaches in their teaching. However, leaders are not complacent and know that there is still much to do to ensure that there is consistency and impact from these changes.

Positive progress has been made in developing the curriculum since the last inspection. Leaders are implementing a curriculum that provides coverage of important knowledge across a range of subjects. Planning is well sequenced and identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to learn over time. However, this implementation is in its infancy and leaders have had little opportunity yet to evaluate how well this is being implemented. At this early stage, leaders are aware that staff will require ongoing training to support them to develop their skills and knowledge. The teaching of reading has been a clear priority in the development of the curriculum. There are clear improvements in this area. Your intention is to continue this focus for this academic year with staff working alongside a specialist in reading and phonics.

Leaders are focused on improving provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the school. A full audit of SEND provision has helped to identify strengths and areas for development. Clear strategic priorities have been created that reflect this. Support from the trust is focused on these priorities and is enhancing the expertise of the special educational needs coordinator. For example, work has led to improving parental involvement. Leaders intend to work closely with new teaching staff to ensure that they benefit from the training that was carried out with other colleagues in the summer term. Other next steps include supporting staff to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum for pupils with SEND.

In addition to the ongoing support provided by the trust, further ongoing specific support is planned from other commissioned providers, which matches closely the school's key improvement priorities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Birmingham Diocesan multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Gater  
**His Majesty's Inspector**