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Jo Mould
Headteacher
Sherburn Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mould

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Sherburn Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on Friday 24 February 2023 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 June 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, members of the interim executive board of governors, a representative from the Diocese of York and a representative from the local authority 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. I also visited lessons, met with a selection of teaching and non-teaching staff and met with the senior leaders responsible for safeguarding in school. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Sherburn Church of England Primary School 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

Since the previous inspection, you were appointed as an interim headteacher in October 2022. There have also been several changes to the school's governing body. This includes

an interim executive board being put in place from December 2022. The new headteacher and interim executive board have rightly focused on prioritising safeguarding at the school.

You are ensuring that leaders at all levels are taking effective action to develop a culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders have ensured that statutory policies are in place and that these are understood and enacted by staff. Staff have received up-to-date and appropriate training to ensure that they understand the key signs and symptoms of abuse. You are aware that leaders need to look more strategically at how staff training in safeguarding can be mapped across the academic year and how it also needs to be responsive to trends, patterns and local risks. You have introduced regular briefings and updates to staff about key aspects of safeguarding. There are now more robust systems and processes for staff to share concerns around safeguarding. This means that leaders can act swiftly to follow up these concerns and put the support in place for pupils to help keep them safe.

Safeguarding is beginning to be reflected in the curriculum being taught to pupils. With all leaders, you have prioritised online safety and are working to prioritise key aspects of the relationships and sex education curriculum that need to be taught in relation to issues such as consent, safe touch and privacy.

Systems for checking the welfare of pupils who are not attending school are improving. Leaders have introduced a new graded system that means pupils who are absent have their welfare checked via phone calls and, if necessary, home visits. The processes for updating and sharing the health and care plans of pupils who need medication have been strengthened. There is now a detailed system in place that leaders are continuing to establish. Staff are aware of this system and follow it well.

Although safeguarding is now effective, the culture of safeguarding in the school is still developing. Together with leaders, you do all that you can to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders know that this culture of safeguarding is still fragile because of how recently many of these changes have been introduced. For example, the new interim executive board is not able to analyse trends or patterns in safeguarding incidents because of how recently they have been formed. Leaders are at the early stages of regularly analysing safeguarding incidents and reflecting on this analysis in relation to how it might inform future staff training and how the curriculum offer to pupils may need refinement. Leaders know that the policies and procedures they have introduced need to be embedded and secured. Additional policies and documents that contribute to a culture of safeguarding are being developed and shared with staff. These include an updated staff code of conduct that makes reference to radicalisation and a safer recruitment policy.

You, alongside all leaders, know that there is more work to do to improve the quality of education. Leaders' own quality assurance and evaluation shows that in many subjects curriculum thinking is at its earliest stages. Improvements have been made in the consistency and precision of the teaching of early reading, and pupils who need targeted support with reading are beginning to receive it. Leaders know that this support needs to

be carefully informed by assessment information. Leaders have developed a long-term curriculum overview that shows which subjects are taught, and when, as part of the curriculum.

Governance has been strengthened by the appointment of the interim executive board. The board is skilled and experienced. However, because the board has only been formed very recently, it has not had the opportunity to receive detailed reports from the headteacher about safeguarding and the quality of education.

Staff I spoke with feel well supported on the school's improvement journey. They feel that their workload and well-being are considered by leaders. Staff say the school is being well led by you as the interim headteacher and by the deputy headteacher. They feel that you and other leaders are clear about the actions you are taking and why they are needed to improve the school. One member of staff said, 'We are all on the same page.'

Leaders have sought input from several external agencies to help them improve the school. You have begun to access support from the English hub and mathematics hub to develop early reading and the mathematics curriculum. Advisors from the local authority have also provided valuable information and evaluation for leaders to assess the impact of the actions they are taking in school. You have an accurate and detailed picture of the areas of weakness in the school. However, despite the efforts of you and the deputy headteacher, there is limited leadership capacity in the school. It is important that the interim executive board and local authority consider this moving forward so that the school receives the practical support it needs to enact the actions identified by you, together with other leaders, to support the school to continue to improve. This will also need to be reflected in amended timescales for the statement of action and school improvement plan so that planned school improvement activities extend beyond July 2023.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of York, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Liam Colclough
His Majesty's Inspector