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Charlotte Bradley
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Miss Bradley

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Berrow Church of England Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 26 April 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 September 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We also discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also met with executive leaders from the multi-academy trust who are supporting the school, a representative from the local authority and groups of staff, pupils, parents and carers. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Berrow 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 school's action plans are fit for purpose.

Safeguarding is now effective.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher left his post. The deputy headteacher took charge of the school until partway through the spring term. Subsequently, an acting headteacher has been appointed. The deputy headteacher has now resumed her previous role. The acting headteacher has recently been appointed the permanent headteacher from September 2023. Two teachers have also left, along with several members of support staff.

The school is set to join The Priory Learning Trust in August 2023. The local authority has commissioned the trust to support the school's improvement work during the spring and summer term as part of the transition process.

During the monitoring visit, I focused particularly on the school's actions in safeguarding, strategic planning and the curriculum.

Leaders have made a positive start to the school's improvement journey. Following the initial period after the inspection, the school did not tackle urgent issues with safeguarding quickly enough. However, since the involvement of the trust, the pace of change has been rapid. It has prioritised safeguarding. Through clear and consistent messages, leaders have changed the culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff now take ownership of keeping children safe. They know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Previously, staff did not note concerns in a detailed manner or sometimes, at all. This is no longer the case. Through leaders' training, staff now record any concerns in a thorough and systematic way. Leaders now keep records in one place. They have the whole picture of a pupil. This helps them take timely and decisive action to get pupils the support they need. Staff say they have confidence that leaders will act on their concerns. They value leaders' feedback on the outcomes of issues raised.

Leaders have made changes to the entry to the site to make it safer at the start of the day. They have strengthened signing-in procedures for visitors. Expectations of mobile phone and camera use are now clear. Leaders have established robust procedures for risk assessments for off-site activities.

Leaders have ensured that statutory policies are up to date and reflect government guidance. They have trained all staff, including any new members, to ensure that they understand this guidance. Leaders have further plans to ensure that safeguarding training is more regular to help staff remember key information over the long term.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. Most pupils feel the school's new behaviour policy has had a positive impact. Leaders monitor the frequency of behavioural issues. However, they do not yet check trends in the types of incidents so that preventative work can take place. They recognise that there is more to do in this area.

Other improvements in the school's work are at an early stage. Leaders have identified that the current curriculum needs a significant overhaul so that pupils know and remember more. They have ensured that staff understand the purpose and rationale behind the new curriculum. However, leaders' work on identifying the specific knowledge that pupils will learn, including those with special education educational needs and/or disabilities, is still in progress.

Leaders have started to make changes to how pupils learn to read. Older pupils now study a broad range of texts. Pupils will learn a new phonics curriculum from September 2023. Leaders have also taken action to improve the school environment so that it is less cluttered and more purposeful for pupils.

Leaders' action plans are clear, precise and measurable. This allows governors to support and challenge leaders about the school's progress. Governors know the school is in its early stages of improvement. Leaders and governors now have a shared vision. For example, they are re-establishing the school's links to the church and have set about strengthening its Christian ethos.

Despite the turbulence since the inspection, staff are positive about the direction of the school. They feel that leaders listen to their views. Although many changes have been introduced, teachers feel that this has not been detrimental in terms of workload. Leaders have provided well-being support for staff. Parents recognise the changes leaders have made, particularly with communication. They appreciate that leaders are visible and available to talk to if they have any concerns.

The trust has helped support the school in a range of areas, such as providing leadership and helping to train governors. The school has adopted many of the trust's policies and procedures, which has helped to speed up areas of improvement such as safeguarding and reading.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Edge
His Majesty's Inspector