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Jacquie Coles and Paula Shaw
Interim Headteachers
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Dear Jacquie Coles and Paula Shaw

Special measures monitoring inspection of Westcott Church of England School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 10 and 11 May 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 require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in June 2022.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, governors and the local authority 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. I also spoke to parents, looked at curriculum planning, visited lessons, met with staff and pupils, and scrutinised documents. I also took into account responses to the staff and parent surveys. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Westcott Church of England School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of interim leaders covering the substantive headteacher's absence. Staffing has also been turbulent. The school currently has several supply teachers. One of these has only been with the school since the start of term. The majority of the governing body are new in their role and the chair of the governing body has stepped into this role since the last inspection. The planned academisation is yet to happen. For this inspection, I focused on the quality of education, personal development, and leadership and management, including safeguarding. These were the aspects of the school that were judged inadequate in June 2022.

You have prioritised improving phonics. Pupils are now learning to read in a coherent way. Staff have all been trained and there is now a consistent approach to teaching early reading. The books that pupils read are matched to the sounds learned. Assessments identify pupils who need more support to catch up. However, the system for helping these pupils to keep up with their peers is less robust. As part of your focus on early reading, you have ensured that older pupils have been supported to acquire phonics skills. However, the teaching of reading beyond the early stages is less well developed. As a result, older pupils are not reading as well as they should be able to. There is a plan in place to address this, but this has been hampered by staff changes.

Changes to the teaching team this year have resulted in limited subject leadership capacity, so you currently have responsibility for most subject areas. Improvements have been made to the curriculum, but you know there is more to be done. There is now a curriculum in place for all subjects. This means that pupils are learning in line with national curriculum requirements. However, staff are currently assessing what skills and knowledge will be covered once units of learning are taught. This means that the sequencing of skills and knowledge is not as precise as it needs to be. Teachers do not consistently identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. There is also variability in how well they design activities to match the intended curriculum. You are aware of this and are supporting teaching staff by providing planning. Following the last inspection, you have reviewed the personal, social and health education for pupils. As a result, they are now learning about relationships and wider issues which may affect them. You have plans to develop this further.

Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They are motivated to improve the school and provide challenge and support to you. You have developed a comprehensive professional development plan for staff. All staff attend training. Staff comment positively about being able to make valuable contributions. However, there are barriers to school improvement given the lack of clarity around the leadership moving forward and when the academisation will take place. It is currently unclear what the leadership will look like in September. Therefore, the high ambition for pupils to achieve well is not yet realised. There needs to be a sharper focus on improving teaching in order to meet the needs of the curriculum.

The arrangements for safeguarding are now effective. You have rightly prioritised ensuring that everyone understands how to safeguard pupils. All staff and governors are trained. Safeguarding is now a standing item during meetings. You keep rigorous records and follow up concerns in a swift and timely manner. Staff understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. You are currently moving towards using electronic records but have made sure nothing is lost from the old system. Pupils know how to stay safe online and in the real world.

You are utilising every opportunity for support. Support from a trust, the diocese and local authority is enabling you to develop the school. As a result of this, you have refined English and mathematics plans effectively. You are continuing to use support effectively to make improvements to the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Staggs
His Majesty's Inspector