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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Gareth Smith
Executive Principal
The National Church of England Junior School, Grantham
Castlegate
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG31 6SR

Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The National Church of England Junior School, Grantham

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 12 June 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 took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, the head of school and representatives of the trust 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 carried out other activities, including visiting lessons, meeting with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), speaking to pupils, speaking to subject leaders, and scrutinising documents and work. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The National Church of England Junior School, Grantham continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers deliver the curriculum in foundation subjects consistently and effectively to ensure that pupils know and remember more of it.
- develop opportunities explicitly for pupils to gain a better understanding of different faiths, cultures and British values.

Main findings

There have been significant changes to leadership at all levels since the last inspection. The local board of trustees has been replaced by the interim local board. This is chaired by trust executives. The interim local board is holding school leaders to account more effectively. You took up your position as the executive principal in September 2022. You appointed a new head of school in December 2022. You have also appointed a new SENCo to the school's leadership team.

Plans that set out the knowledge that pupils should learn are now firmly in place for all subjects. The curriculum is broad and pupils are now beginning to remember more of it. The strength in delivery is clear to see in core subjects, where pupils are beginning to benefit from a depth of learning. You have appointed a new subject leader for mathematics. You have identified that further adaptations are needed in mathematics to ensure that pupils are able to solve problems and reason more effectively.

All subject leaders now have the time to develop and monitor their subjects. The trust's educational development advisers have supported subject leaders to evaluate the quality of the curriculum. The curriculum is not yet consistently well delivered in many foundation subjects. Pupils' work is not of a consistent high quality and their understanding of the foundation subjects lacks depth.

There is now a strong approach to helping pupils learn to read. You have invested in a new systematic synthetic phonics scheme. Staff who deliver this scheme are well trained. They are early reading experts. They use a well-understood and effective approach to help pupils learn to read. Adults support pupils at the early stages of reading to become better readers. All pupils study a range of texts and this helps to develop their love for reading.

The appointment of the SENCo has helped teachers to be more ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The needs of these pupils are identified more precisely. Teachers make more effective use of the strategies to help pupils with SEND access the curriculum. Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of the school. This was not always the case at the time of the last inspection.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve the culture of behaviour at the school. Behaviour is now much more positive. Staff and pupils agree that the behaviour policy is now applied more consistently by staff and that the expectations of pupils' behaviour are higher. The strengthened pastoral team is proactive in helping those pupils who may need extra support to show better self-regulation. The school has introduced pastoral support plans to support these pupils to manage their own behaviour. Different types of behaviour incidents are now logged through the school's electronic system. This has allowed leaders to analyse trends and address behaviour issues more effectively. At the start of the academic year there were several high-level behaviour incidents, but these have now become few and far between as pupils and staff have adjusted to the higher expectations.

You have appointed an education welfare officer. You recognise that there are still some pupils who are persistently absent. The education welfare officer is working closely with external agencies and families to improve the attendance of these pupils. This also demonstrates that leaders are making improvements beyond what was recommended in the previous inspection.

You have considered how pupils should develop their understanding of British values and of different faiths and cultures. However, this is still in the early stages of being planned. This means that these opportunities are not embedded or given explicitly enough. Pupils still only have a surface-level understanding of British values and of different faiths and cultures.

Staff and pupils describe the school as 'much improved'. The large-scale changes have been managed effectively by leaders to avoid overloading staff. This is leading to sustainable improvement. Staff report high levels of engagement with the new leaders. Staff's workload and well-being have been duly considered as you make improvements to the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Rakesh Patel
His Majesty's Inspector