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Dear Miss Winters

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Digby Church of England School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 21 September 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.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, governors, the local authority locality lead and other staff 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 conducted lesson visits in all classes, including the early years, and scrutinised the books of a sample of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). I discussed safeguarding arrangements and met with a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

The school has responded swiftly to address the findings of the previous inspection. No time has been wasted. Digby Church of England School is part of the Spires Federation. A restructure of leadership across the federation has been undertaken. An interim federation executive headteacher, an interim federation deputy headteacher and an interim federation lead have been appointed. Additionally, a federation special educational needs coordinator and new early years lead are now in post. These leaders work across the three schools within the federation. They know the schools well.

The school has been through a period of turbulence and change. There is evidence that the interim leadership arrangements are having a positive impact. You are an ambitious leadership team. Improvement planning is thorough. You have the backing of the staff. The local authority has rightly identified that additional external mentoring and support should continue in order that improvements are sustained and embedded.

You feel well supported by the governing body. Governors have shown a great deal of commitment. They care for the school community. A review of governance has been undertaken. The findings from the review have been actioned. Structures and systems are far more robust. Governance capacity has improved. New governors with appropriate knowledge, skills and experience have joined the governing body. There is a renewed sense of ambition. Governors are currently seeking an appropriate academy solution.

There has been a complete refresh in the early years. You are pleased with the developments so far. There has been a change of leadership and of staffing. The environment supports curriculum implementation. It is far more language-rich. There is greater opportunity for children to independently develop communication and language skills. There is evidence of a more confident level of engagement from the children. Children are beginning to understand the 'choose it, use it, put it away' routines. You are aware that the next step is to ensure that all adults in the provision have the training needed to support children to develop language and communication more effectively. Questioning is not yet used sufficiently well to probe children's understanding.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly. Individual support plans have improved. Pupils' targets are focused and measurable. The newly devised 'pupil with SEND journey flow-chart' has improved clarity for staff and parents. The critical next step is to ensure that the curriculum is successfully adapted so that pupils with SEND achieve and are well prepared for their next stage in learning. Currently, inconsistencies in curriculum implementation still exist for pupils with SEND.

Subject leaders have received high-quality professional development. They are more effective in their roles. You indicated that they now have ownership of the subjects that they lead. Curriculum planning has been refined. There is now absolute clarity about the key knowledge that pupils need to know and understand in each of the subjects that they study. Monitoring systems have been honed. The intent of the curriculum is well understood. Curriculum implementation is improving but remains inconsistent. You

acknowledge that the next step is to develop the checks in place to ensure that the curriculum is having the required impact. Even more pupils, including pupils with SEND, must achieve the ambitious curriculum end points set.

The school has benefited from high-quality external support, including from the local authority, a local trust and a teaching school. This support should continue and should be closely monitored to ensure long-term and meaningful impact.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, 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

Jayne Ashman
His Majesty's Inspector