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Jo Mould
Headteacher
Sherburn Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
St Hilda's Street
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Dear Ms Mould,

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

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on Friday 6 October 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in June 2022.

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, members of the interim executive board of governors, a representative from the Diocese of York and 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, spoke to pupils, 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.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to be no longer judged as having serious weaknesses.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Since the previous monitoring visit, you have increased the number of times that you meet with the Interim Executive Board (IEB). You are ensuring that the information you provide to the IEB is sufficiently detailed. This is allowing the IEB to offer increased challenge around the quality of education that is on offer to pupils. This also helps the IEB members to assure themselves about the culture of safeguarding in the school. You have ensured that personal, health social and economic education is being taught on a regular basis to all pupils. This is helping pupils to have an understanding of online safety, local safeguarding risks, and healthy relationships.

You have developed a clear safeguarding training pathway for all members of staff. This means that staff now receive regular, focused and meaningful safeguarding training. You have developed a strategic plan for ensuring that this training is up to date, relevant and timely. You are developing this plan to identify the safeguarding training that the IEB members need to complete. You have also made sure that staff are aware of local safeguarding risks. You have systems in place for identifying when these local risks might change. Staff are clear on who to report concerns to and how to report them. Staff deal with concerns about pupils or families swiftly. You work closely with external agencies, as necessary, to get extra support for families if they need it.

The culture of safeguarding in the school continues to be strengthened and developed. The school is beginning to analyse safeguarding incidents, trends and patterns. The school has also introduced systems for quickly identifying pupils who may be at risk of becoming persistently absent. You are aware of the need to further develop analysis of safeguarding trends and incidents, and the actions that the school takes around persistent and potentially persistently absent pupils, so that the impact of the school's actions can be more carefully evaluated. Safeguarding audits and other checks and visits from the local authority have continued to be used to regularly re-visit and check on safeguarding arrangements in the school.

You and other leaders have recently undertaken further work to develop the quality of education on offer to pupils. You have now ensured that there is a curriculum in place across all subjects. There is a progression of knowledge that teachers are beginning to use to structure their teaching. The implementation of this curriculum in foundation subjects is still in its initial stages. You are in the process of considering how the knowledge in these subjects can be more carefully mapped to reflect the needs of the pupils currently on roll. You are aware of the need for leaders to now develop clear and agreed pedagogical approaches for the foundation curriculum subjects.

The school has engaged with the local English Hub to provide training for staff on the phonics programme. There is some emerging consistency around phonics teaching. You are developing some approaches to promote a love of reading in school. You are aware of the need to ensure that assessment is being used to quickly identify the lowest attaining readers and to ensure that the additional sessions and resources in place to help pupils to

catch up are precisely matched to their needs. In some phonics lessons, pupils are being taught sounds that they are not ready to learn. Sometimes, phonic assessments are not strategically used to match follow up teaching to pupils' phonic knowledge. In mathematics, assessments do not fully identify gaps in some pupils' prior knowledge. This limits these pupils from fully accessing their year group curriculum content.

Staff have recently received training to develop their understanding of how to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to be successful. Some pupils with SEND need to have a more targeted approach to learning phonics to support them to become fluent readers as quickly as possible. You are aware of the need for staff to be trained, at the earliest possible opportunity, to adapt their teaching of phonics.

The IEB offer robust challenge around the actions being taken by the school to improve. They are alert to the challenges that the school faces around the leadership capacity to move the school forward, particularly curriculum subject leadership. Staff have a strong sense that the school is improving. They are fully aware of the work that still needs to take place. You are aware of the need to continue to move the school forward and be considerate and conscious of the workload and well-being of staff. The statement of action is appropriate and recognises the challenges the school faces in continuing to move forward.

The school has actively sought input from external agencies, including the English Hub and the Mathematics Hub. This work is at its earliest stages but is beginning to have a positive impact. The school, the local authority and the IEB are aware of the need to build curriculum leadership capacity, so that the implementation of the curriculum subjects can be done with quality, rigour and precision. You are continuing to source support and input from external agencies to help you with this aspect of school improvement.

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