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30 January 2016

Mrs M Parsons
Executive Headteacher
Trinity Church School
Woodborough Lane
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Dear Mrs Parsons

Special measures monitoring inspection of Trinity Church School

Following my visit with Martin Greenwood, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 18–19 January 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the academy’s recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2016.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust’s statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy’s improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2016.

- Ensure that the leaders and managers of Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership:
 - rapidly secure a stable teaching staff of well-trained and skilled practitioners
 - establish a consistent system for assessing and tracking pupils' work which teachers then use to plan learning and to identify pupils who need extra support, including in the early years
 - hold senior leaders fully to account for the rapid improvement of the school.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching:
 - establish a robust system for checking the quality of teachers' performance
 - devise a structured programme of training to improve the quality of teaching
 - learn from the best practice in other, highly effective schools.
- Urgently improve pupils' outcomes and insist that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils are able to achieve, including in the early years
 - the most able pupils are given activities that engage and challenge them to think deeply about their learning
 - learning support assistants receive further direction to increase the effectiveness of their work, especially when supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 January 2017 to 19 January 2017

Evidence

- Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, groups of staff and pupils, parents and four representatives from the local governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority and conducted a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including information about pupils' attainment and progress. Procedures for safeguarding and monitoring attendance were evaluated.
- Inspectors observed pupils throughout the school day. They visited classes and carried out joint observations with senior leaders. They also looked at pupils' written work. Discussions were held both formally, and informally, with pupils. An inspector attended an assembly.

Context

Trinity Church School joined the Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership, a multi-academy trust, as a sponsored school on 1 June 2016. A local governing body was established to replace the interim board at the same time. There have been considerable staff changes. Only four class teachers remain from those present at the time of inspection. A substantive executive headteacher was appointed in September 2016. Two deputy headteachers and three class teachers were also appointed at this time.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The trust, senior leaders and the governing body have made a resolute start in dealing with the challenges facing the academy. Newly appointed staff have the appropriate expertise and knowledge to bring about improvement. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are building a strong culture of transparency. Accurate and relevant information is shared regularly. The trust set up a parents' meeting swiftly after the inspection report was published to explain the school's position and plans for improvement.

You have placed a strong focus on creating a confident and united team, empowering others to take ownership for improvement. Staff are responding well and appreciate opportunities to contribute to improvements. You are effectively fine-tuning your school improvement plan to set clearer targets to plot the trajectory of school improvement. You and your leadership team have resisted 'quick fixes' but instead are putting in place the essential steps to ensure long-term, sustainable improvement.

Your leadership team is developing new systems to help teachers across the school check on the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' understanding, knowledge and skills. Although this work is in its infancy, the new system is enabling teachers to record and check the progress of individual pupils and match the work to suit pupils' needs. Subject leaders' support for teachers' planning in English and mathematics has been thorough and effective.

The Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership is well established. Consequently, proven systems for managing teachers' performance have been put into place quickly. As a result, trust leaders hold senior leaders to account and can demonstrate improvement. In contrast, the governing body is new. The appointment of a national lead of governance to be chair of the governing body is an astute decision by the Trust. New governors bring complementary expertise and skills to their roles, which lends confidence to their work. They show considerable commitment to their role, attending a comprehensive programme of training events facilitated by the trust. As a result, they are aware of their responsibilities and are developing firm plans to hold leaders to account. However, the impact of governor challenge and support is not yet fully clear. You acknowledge that there is more work to be done before governors are able to evaluate the achievement of pupils across the school robustly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Staff morale is good. This represents a significant improvement since the section 5 inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants who spoke with inspectors were equally positive about the training and guidance that leaders provide. The newly established teaching team are conscientiously applying the school's new requirements. Leaders have established effective lines of communication. Consequently, good practice is shared and embedded. For example, as well as weekly training sessions, leaders meet with teaching assistants every two weeks to share improvements and develop good practice. As a result, the whole team are committed to improving outcomes for pupils.

Senior leaders are providing effective support and clear guidance to ensure that teachers help pupils to catch up quickly. For example, focused and intensive phonics training has resulted in significant improvements. Similarly, new systems for the teaching of reading have increased pupils' confidence and interest. In turn, standards in reading are improving. Teachers are adjusting what they teach so that it helps all pupils of all abilities to progress at a quicker pace. As one child explained, 'We get pushed to do our best'.

Developments in the school's system for tracking pupils' progress are helping teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders are in the early stages of gathering a true understanding of pupils' achievement. However, rigorous checking and moderation of pupils' work across schools both within and outside of the trust

lends confidence to the accuracy of teachers' judgements. Currently, teachers' precise guidance is helping pupils to catch up. For example, pupils' writing reflects a significant improvement in their punctuation, grammar and spelling. Similarly, high expectations have led to improvements in the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation. However, there is still some work to be done in unravelling gaps in what pupils know, can do and understand before leaders can confidently set clear targets to accelerate pupils' progress.

Your new team in the early years has been able to establish effective teaching and assessment routines that are helping the children to make progress. Teachers have developed a bright and stimulating environment. Photographs clearly demonstrate the much-improved outdoor facilities from the time of the last inspection. Children eagerly choose activities to write and practise their phonics and were proud to show inspectors their achievements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are considerate and polite. They spoke to inspectors confidently when sharing their learning. Work in books was neat and well presented, reflecting pupils' improved attitudes. Play and lunchtimes are happy and relaxed occasions. Pupils are well supervised and are kind to each other. Older pupils voluntarily join the lunchtime homework club. They demonstrate a desire to learn and improve. For example, one Year 6 pupil told the inspector 'I've caught up on my Year 5 learning and now I'm starting to cover what I need to learn in Year 6'.

The quality and extent of information pupils receive about how to keep themselves safe online are good. Safeguarding measures are compliant. Pupils say they feel safe.

Overall attendance is in line with the national average. However, there are a number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Leaders' close work with other agencies ensures that 'no stone is left unturned' in their work to keep pupils safe when they are not in school. Currently, leaders do not analyse pupils' attendance information with sufficient rigour to track trends and target improvement. Consequently, the attendance of those pupils who are regularly absent is not improving quickly enough.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2016, the academy did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. However, outcomes are beginning to improve. There is clear evidence, for example, that the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics is likely to be in line with the national average this year. Similarly, standards in reading across the school are tangibly improving.

A legacy of underachievement and inaccurate assessment means that many pupils have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. The school's bi-weekly assessment points show that the majority of pupils are making progress from their September starting points. You acknowledge, however, that there is still much to do to accelerate pupils' progress further so that they can catch up with the pace of progress other pupils nationally make from their starting points.

External support

The trust has provided strong support. All leaders have been proactive in working with a range of partners, including the local teaching alliance. This has supported staff in developing their expertise. Consequently, subject leaders in English and mathematics are strong. Their work is leading to improved outcomes for pupils.

Trust leaders recognise the importance of linking with schools externally to provide challenge and reflection. The school accesses local authority guidance and training updates for headteachers and senior leaders. These are supporting leaders' wider understanding of their roles and curriculum development and have left no member of staff in any doubt about the urgency of improvement needed.