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Mrs Michelle Parsons
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Parsons

Special measures monitoring inspection of Trinity Church School

Following my visit with Her Majesty's Inspector, Nathan Kemp, to your school on 14–15 June 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2016. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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 school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may 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 second monitoring inspection on 14–15 June 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and, alongside senior leaders, scrutinised documents, including information about pupils' attainment and progress. One inspector met with a group of pupils. We also spoke to pupils in and around the school. Inspectors met parents on the playground and reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We held a discussion with three members of the local governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement officer. A meeting was held with the headteacher and the chief executive officer of the Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership Trust. Procedures for safeguarding and monitoring attendance were also evaluated.

Context

Staffing has remained mainly stable since the previous monitoring visit, with the exception that two members of staff are currently on maternity leave.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and managers have accelerated their drive to improve since my last visit. Consequently, progress in the areas for improvement is gathering momentum. You are working on the right aspects for improvement and have refined the school improvement plan since my last visit. You have identified measurable outcomes from leaders' actions and this is helping governors to evaluate the effectiveness of your work with greater precision.

Your senior leaders reflect the trust's clear commitment to improvement. You have successfully dealt with the most urgent issues identified during my last visit and have started to embed the more successful aspects of the school's work. You recognise the need to redefine leaders' roles and responsibilities so that staff expertise is matched to the needs across the school and across subjects. Currently, the drive for improvement has been most successful in key stage 2. Your plans reflect an increasing focus on key stage 1 in the next phase of the school's development.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of pupils' attainment. Subject leaders' support for teachers' planning has been particularly thorough and effective across reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2 and in the teaching of phonics in Year 1 and in the early years. The investment you have put into the staff team is beginning to pay dividends. Staff share your passion for improvement and subscribe to your high expectations. Teaching is beginning to quash the legacy of pupils' underachievement. In my last visit, you were still getting to grips with unravelling the accuracy of assessments linked to pupils' attainment. You have taken swift action to improve assessment practices in the school. As a result, teachers' assessments of pupils' outcomes are accurate. You acknowledge the need to fine-tune your systems for measuring pupils' progress. Doing so would allow leaders to provide teachers with the necessary guidance, so that pupils' progress further accelerates.

The governing body has strengthened its work since my last visit. The trust's astute intervention in governor selection and in the provision of well-matched training is beginning to reap rewards. The broad range of governors' skills, together with their considerable commitment, is increasing the rate of school improvement. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are now confident enough to challenge leaders and delve deeper into testing the school's effectiveness. For example, governors recognise the need to evaluate more precisely the impact that additional funding such as the pupil premium has on pupils' outcomes.

Senior leaders' actions are bringing about improvement to the school's curriculum provision this academic year. For example, the forest school was high on pupils' agenda to tell inspectors about. You rightly celebrate the significant improvements in reading, writing and mathematics, and recognise that the next stage in the school's journey is to ensure that pupils develop the necessary skills and understanding in other subjects including, for example, geography and history.

Parents are very pleased with the way you lead and manage the school. They find your newsletters helpful and have greatly appreciated the stability of permanent staffing in the school. Parents are supportive of the changes you and your team have made to date. They have noticed that their children are making better progress and say their children are happy coming to school. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'This school is transformed. It is wonderful. My child's progress has soared.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The high-quality training that your leadership team provides for teaching staff is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Standards are rising. Relatively inexperienced teachers in the school have grown considerably in ability and confidence. However, you recognise that there is a need to iron out some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations to ensure that every child is supported and challenged to achieve their best. You are acutely aware that there is more to do to check teachers' performance and link their targets more closely to the teaching standards. As a result, teachers can be even clearer about where and how to make further improvements.

Generally, teachers follow the school's teaching, learning and marking policies appropriately. Some teachers are following the policies precisely and this is leading to much improved standards, for example in Years 5 and 6. However, you recognise that not all teachers are sufficiently competent in using assessments to plan suitable next steps in pupils' learning for different pupil groups. When this is not done well, progress slows.

Improved tracking and more incisive targeting of support, both inside and outside the classroom, are resulting in some marked improvements for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the concerted work with this group is relatively recent. Your special educational needs coordinator has identified where teachers are less confident in planning for particular needs and has arranged support. It is too soon to see the impact of this work. Conversely, senior leaders' intensive work with teaching assistants has been universally effective. Consequently, teaching assistants are highly skilled and provide valuable additional support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Since my previous visit, the most able pupils across the school have been identified. Teachers' expectations for this group of pupils have increased. Consequently, the most able pupils are making more progress than they have in the past. However, our joint scrutiny of books demonstrated that there is still work to be done to ensure that the most able pupils receive the challenge to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are happy in school. They delight in sharing their learning and one told inspectors, 'Our school is much better now. There's nothing bad about it.' They say that bullying is extremely rare and that their learning is rarely disrupted in class. The school's behaviour log reflects this. Incidents of poor behaviour are few. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons, and are respectful and polite to adults and to one another. Breaks and lunchtimes are orderly occasions, where pupils play happily together in the well-cared-for school grounds. Work in pupils' books is generally neat and well presented, although inspectors identified that the care and pride pupils take in the presentation of their work varies across subjects and year groups. Pupils say that they feel safe. The quality and extent of information pupils receive about how to keep themselves safe online is good. Governors make close and regular checks to ensure that safeguarding measures are compliant.

Overall attendance is in line with the national average. However, I noticed at my last visit that a significant number of pupils were absent from school on a regular basis. You have improved your systems for checking pupils' attendance. Your administration staff are meticulous in keeping careful records of pupils' attendance and are quick to follow up absences to assure themselves that pupils are safe. You are also celebrating good attendance more. As a result, the number of pupils persistently absent from school is significantly reduced.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes continue to improve. The proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development is broadly in line with last year's national average. Outcomes in Year 1 show that a higher proportion of pupils are on track to meet the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 than has been seen nationally. However, you recognise that outcomes at Year 2 are disappointing again this year with too few pupils making the progress they need to catch up.

Recent improvements to the quality of teaching in mathematics have proved successful in developing pupils' ability to solve problems and apply reasoning to their mathematics. The proportion of pupils meeting age-related expectations across all year groups is rising and is quickly accelerating across key stage 2. Similarly, reading and writing standards across the school are rising, although the pace of improvement is less marked in writing compared with reading. Disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make larger gains in their learning. You have rightly pinpointed where improvements are most needed and have appropriate plans in place to tackle inconsistencies.

External support

The chief executive officer of the Midsomer Norton School's Partnership Trust, along with other representatives, has a broad and accurate knowledge of the schools' strengths and priorities for improvement. He provides strong support and challenge to you personally and redirects resources as appropriate to ensure that no stone is left unturned in providing Trinity staff with the training and support they need. Most notably, support for subject leaders has improved teachers' subject knowledge and accuracy of assessment of pupils' outcomes. The appointment of a trust-wide attendance officer has been effective in working with families to support good and improving attendance. Additional challenge from the trust's school improvement adviser helps you and your team to gain an overview of the impact of your work.

The regional schools commissioner is also keeping a watchful eye on the school's improvement journey and providing guidance where needed.