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9 February 2018

Mrs Joanne Chrich  
St Paul's CofE VA Primary School  
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Cambridgeshire  
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Dear Mrs Chrich

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Paul's CofE VA Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

This was my second monitoring visit to evaluate the progress the school has made since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to urgently and rapidly:

- strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and governors so that there is capacity and rigour in moving forward improvements in the school and in addressing the areas identified in the previous inspection
- secure consistently high-quality teaching, learning and accurate assessment across the school, including in early years, to ensure that all children's and pupils' needs are met, enabling them to achieve well from their varied starting points.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I had meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), who is also a member of the senior leadership team. Additionally, I met with representatives of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair. I held a telephone conversation with the school's

former local authority representative, to discuss the actions taken since the first monitoring visit. The current school improvement adviser attended the inspection and I also met with the local authority's head of service. I visited all classes, talked to pupils and looked at the work in their books. I evaluated the most recent school action plan and looked at a range of documents relating to the most recent parent survey, to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the school's safeguarding arrangements.

## **Context**

Since the first monitoring visit in June 2016, there have been many changes in leadership, staff and governance. New leaders have been appointed as the deputy headteacher and SENCo. There have also been significant teaching staff changes and new members joining the governing body. You started your role in September 2017 but were unavoidably absent for a period of time during the autumn term. This has resulted in some interim leadership support from another local school and the local authority.

## **Main findings**

Leaders, governors and the local authority have not quickened the pace of improvement since the previous monitoring inspection. Too much of the school's work remains weak and the initial improvements that leaders and governors secured have not been built upon or sustained over time. During the last 18 months, leaders' checks on crucial aspects of the school's work have not secured rapid improvements. These aspects include teaching, assessment, pupils' progress and the effectiveness of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, leaders have not successfully attended to the issues identified in the previous full inspection in a sustained way and so are not raising standards quickly and meaningfully.

You have quickly and astutely worked out what needs to be done to get the school back on track. Upon arrival, you undertook necessary reviews and sharpening up of safeguarding systems and procedures. Although statutory checks had been carried out and children and pupils were safe, you needed to carry out urgent work to follow up where policies and processes had not been rigorously applied. This work, and the further tightening up of all systems, has been checked by the local authority. Inspection evidence confirms that safeguarding is effective.

The quality of governance has not developed sufficiently since the previous monitoring visit. While governors give much time and commitment to the school, they have had to focus on other priorities apart from how successfully the school is raising standards. Moreover, although governors ask probing questions, they do not ensure that they assure themselves of the impact that leaders are having on making the much-needed improvements. The governing body acknowledges that there are many aspects where actions have not been rapid enough. Governors are providing

you with increasingly effective support and are benefiting from your perceptive assessment of the school's current position.

You have not yet had enough time to demonstrate significant sustained impact. You have shared with other leaders, governors and the local authority an accurate evaluation of the school's performance and you are rightfully challenging the status quo. Following this audit of provision, you have developed an action plan that is more sharply focused on strengthening leadership and management and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Despite your rapid efforts, these systems for monitoring, developing leaders and securing high-quality teaching and learning are still in their infancy.

You know that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently strong enough. There is too much variability to secure better pupil progress. Until recently, teachers have lacked guidance, support and understanding about what effective teaching and good progress looks like. Evidence in pupils' books shows that teachers do not set work which is sufficiently challenging or make sure that pupils have secured their knowledge, skills and understanding before they move on to new work. Similarly, books also show that some teachers do not explain ideas and concepts well, or question pupils to develop and deepen their understanding. There is very little evidence of pupils having the opportunity to apply their fundamental skills of reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum in other subject areas. Teachers do not use assessment well to inform what they teach and so pupils' needs are not well enough considered. Consequently, over time, pupils are not making the progress that they should.

You have now identified, and had verified by external checking, that assessment across the school is not wholly accurate. Initial work on assessment since the previous inspection has been stalled by changes in staffing and a lack of rigorous leadership checking. During the inspection, this was further confirmed when looking at current pupils' books across the school. Although you have quickly implemented sharper monitoring processes and are looking more carefully at individual pupils' progress, it is too early to tell the impact of this work.

Although the strategic oversight of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving under your leadership, leaders do not know precisely the difference that they are making to all groups of pupils for whom they receive additional funding, such as disadvantaged pupils. This is because the quality of evaluations and the review of provision has not been good enough. Since the previous inspection, leaders do not have evidence to verify that they know securely enough if their work is making a difference to all pupils' achievement.

Since the first monitoring visit, early years has experienced changes and inconsistency in leadership and staffing. The local authority adviser has continued to support leaders, but the pace of improvement has not been sustained. There continues to be work to do to ensure that the quality of teaching improves to secure better outcomes for the children.

## **External support**

The local authority has provided St Paul's with an abundance of support. However, until more recently, this has not consistently provided the necessary rigour and challenge to the school's leadership. This has resulted in improvement work not being undertaken urgently enough. Leaders have not been held securely to account for the difference they are making to the school's performance.

Some of the more effective support provided by the local authority has been hindered by the turbulence in leadership and changes in staff. Advisers for early years, mathematics and English have all provided appropriate advice and guidance.

Representatives from the local authority have acknowledged that greater urgency and more rigorous support and challenge is required. This has happened more recently following your arrival. For example, the current school improvement adviser is visiting the school more frequently and the local authority brokered the support of an experienced headteacher during the autumn term to provide additional leadership capacity.

Following on from this inspection, an external review of both governance and of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**