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Mrs Gillian Standing and Mrs Anneka Fisher
Co-Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Standing and Mrs Fisher

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wheatley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 and 18 July 2018, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2017. 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim academy committee (IAC), the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the chief executive officer of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017

- Take urgent action to remedy weaknesses in safeguarding procedures and actively promote pupils' welfare, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all safeguarding procedures follow the current guidance issued by the Secretary of State and meet statutory requirements
 - the safeguarding policy is kept up to date and shared with staff and parents
 - risk assessments are completed appropriately, kept up to date and implemented effectively.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - all systems for monitoring the work of the school are robust, and leaders and managers are held to account for the progress of all groups of pupils
 - school self-evaluation is accurate and informs school improvement planning more effectively
 - school improvement planning is sharply focused on the impact leaders' actions have on improving outcomes for pupils
 - the progress of all groups of pupils is measured accurately by school leaders
 - middle leaders' skills are developed effectively to enable them to have a greater impact on improvements in teaching, learning and assessment
 - the school's curriculum is further developed to engage and excite pupils in a wide range of learning across all subjects
 - all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and thoroughly checked
 - the school's website meets statutory requirements
 - governors take a full and effective role in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement.
- Improve the personal development and welfare of pupils, by:
 - keeping accurate logs of all behaviour and bullying incidents
 - analysing patterns of behaviour in order to enable effective action to be taken to improve it.
- Improve provision and the quality of learning for children in the early years foundation stage, by:
 - providing a range of experiences that challenge and extend children's learning, including for the most able

- making sure that all adults extend children’s learning and develop their understanding.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in order to raise standards and ensure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress, by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can do and the progress they can make
 - providing effective support for all groups of pupils to enable them to make at least good progress from their starting points
 - challenging the most able pupils to enable them to make rapid progress, gain a deeper level of understanding and reach high standards
 - increasing teachers’ understanding of assessment and the progression of knowledge and skills in each subject
 - making sure that teachers’ assessments of pupils’ learning are accurate
 - using assessment information to adjust plans and learning in lessons to provide sufficient challenge to all groups of pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 to 18 July 2018

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection all classes were observed. These observations were all carried out jointly with one of you. I met with both of you and other staff with significant responsibilities, including the assessment leader. I also met with the principal schools adviser from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST). I spoke with two members of the IAC, which acts as the school's governing body, including the chair and one member who also acts as a representative of the Diocese of Oxford. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and met with six pupils in Year 6. I considered the school's own information on pupils' progress and attainment, records relating to safeguarding and advisers' notes of visits. The single central record was checked.

Context

Following a period of extended absence during the spring term 2018, the executive headteacher relinquished her role and reverted back to the role of principal schools advisor for ODST. In February 2018, ODST appointed you as headteachers to share the substantive post in a co-leadership arrangement from September 2018. Both of you have started work this term, sharing your time between your existing school and Wheatley Church of England Primary School. Additionally, a consultant from ODST is working on a part-time basis as the school's acting headteacher for the summer term only.

The deputy headteacher, who is also the key stage 2 coordinator, is absent and will leave at the end of the summer term. The special educational needs coordinator, who is also one of the school's designated safeguarding leads, is absent. The early years leader has recently returned from a period of absence on a phased return. Several teaching staff are leaving at the end of term, including a newly qualified teacher who is transferring to a different ODST school. The mathematics leader will reduce her hours from full time to part time.

The school's number of pupils on roll is declining. Admissions for Reception are lower than in previous years. This means that, in September 2018, there will be one Reception class rather than two. You have adjusted the teaching structure for next academic year so that all pupils will be taught in mixed-aged classes. As a result, the school will have fewer classes next year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Safeguarding remains ineffective. Those responsible, including leaders, trustees and governors, have not ensured that statutory processes are understood, implemented or monitored closely enough. Gaps between what is expected and what actually

happens are all too apparent. During this inspection, I sampled pupils' case files with one of you. Together, we identified some significant shortcomings that, up until the inspection, leaders were not aware of. For example, although staff report concerns correctly, using the school's required template, the proper course of action is not always triggered. Consequently, leaders are not responding appropriately to concerns, such as by seeking advice from social care when they should. Furthermore, in some cases, the school's designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) do not act upon information received with sufficient urgency. There is a worrying time lag between the DSLs receiving the concern and any subsequent action.

For some time, different leaders have been trying to make up for the lack of rigour in the school's safeguarding procedures. For example, leaders had reorganised pupils' case files and completed pupils' chronologies retrospectively. However, although historical notes are now ordered more systematically, this is not the case for current documentation. Records are still not filed routinely, nor chronologies updated as a matter of course. In some examples, dates are recorded incorrectly. The school's record-keeping is still disjointed and incomplete. During this inspection, leaders established a clearer overview of which pupils and families are in receipt of additional support. Troubled by the lack of rigour in safeguarding processes, you have taken up the mantle and are now acting as the school's designated safeguarding leads. This is helpful as you both have the required level of training and understand what is required. Nevertheless, at the time of the inspection stakeholders had not adapted the school's safeguarding policy to reflect these changes to parents.

The pace of improvement is too slow. Due to fluctuating leadership arrangements, a 'stop-start' approach is all too evident. New initiatives are introduced but do not stick and leaders leave too much to chance. For example, at the time of my last visit I reported on the usefulness of the 'at risk children' meetings to discuss pupils' needs in greater depth and ensure that these are prioritised appropriately. However, these meetings are now no longer taking place. Another example relates to the performance management of staff. Last time, I reported that the IAC had helpfully set staff-appraisal targets. However, as we approach the end of this academic year, the review cycle will remain half-finished as not all staff have participated in end-of-year reviews. Different leaders have tried to establish systems and processes for a whole host of the school's activities, but actions are piecemeal and new approaches are not sustained and embedded. This means that leaders flit from one thing to another, adopting a 'fire-fighting mentality'. You are all too aware of the scale of improvement required. You are beginning to pull in the right direction, with the full support of staff, but it is too soon to see what difference this is making.

The assessment leader is making a very positive start in collating the school's assessment information. Information is now shared more widely, including with middle leaders (although not yet with governors). This is helpful. As a result, middle leaders have a much better understanding of the standards attained in their

subjects. They continue to develop their skills and expertise steadily. They are more confident in their use of assessment information and can confidently describe where pupils' underperformance lies within their subjects.

Governors are providing much-needed continuity and remain a steadying influence. They exude a very strong commitment to supporting the school to improve. Governors acknowledge that seeking stability across the school's leadership team, over the last term, has been a necessary priority. They know that while this was a challenge, it was also a distraction from the core business. As a result, impetus was lost in other aspects of school improvement, such as bolstering the quality of teaching. Some aspects of governance now require greater attention. For example, governors do not yet interrogate the school's assessment information in sufficient depth. They do not ask questions of leaders about the performance of groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, or about how well pupils are learning in year groups other than Year 2 and Year 6.

You are a breath of fresh air. You have already, eagerly, got to grips with the role and fully understand the extent of improvement needed. You know that urgency is required and are beginning to work more intelligently and with greater resolve than has been the case in the past. For example, recognising the significant weaknesses in early years, you have already implemented a helpful short-term action plan. Across the school, staff remain positive and say that they have a clearer view of leaders' intentions. You have helpfully established a regular monitoring cycle for teaching. However, as this is only just getting going, it is too soon to see an upturn in the quality of teaching overall.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The rate of improvement in teaching and learning has been significantly slowed by the absence of key leaders, including those responsible for early years, key stage 2, and the school's special educational needs provision. The minutes of staff meetings show that some teachers have expressed frustration at leaders' lack of emphasis on improving teaching and learning. Some classes have had different temporary teachers for an extended period, including children in the Reception Year. Year 6 pupils also told me that they have had several different teachers for some subjects, such as French. Consequently, there has been very little improvement in the quality of teaching and learning this academic year. Too much variability in the quality remains, and it is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Where the weakest teaching persists, too little has been accomplished to improve it.

Teachers still do not plan tasks that meet the different needs of pupils well enough. Tasks are often too hard for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and too easy for the most able. Work set is neither stimulating nor accessible for some groups of pupils. Consequently, although pupils generally

have a go at completing tasks, they lack enthusiasm and do not make the progress they are capable of. Periodically, and particularly in key stage 2, pockets of unrest emerge and pupils do not give their best.

The school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities remains woeful. New leaders have again started adapting and refining the school's special educational needs register so that it correctly records the needs of pupils. Currently, the vast majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not receive the level of support they need to experience success. In recent times, the school has introduced one or two new interventions, but this work is at a very early stage. Although support staff are well intentioned, they do not have the skills and expertise required. Plans were developed to offer more training to staff but these have not come to fruition. As a result, support staff do not have the skills or the necessary tools to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Frustratingly, trustees and leaders are still firming up who is responsible for the line management of support staff.

The teaching of mathematics is not improving quickly enough, particularly in key stage 2. Year 6 pupils and teachers have benefited from the work of a consultant and, in this year group, standards have risen. However, this improvement is not mirrored in other age groups. Some staff struggle to understand the learning intention and to identify for pupils the skills needed for success. This is particularly the case when they set pupils mathematical reasoning tasks. Pupils do not work methodically or systematically and, as a result, often struggle to explain their thinking. The quality of teaching and learning is steadily improving in key stage 1. Staff are beginning to plan tasks that better match pupils' starting points. In one Year 2 class pupils positively brimmed with excitement, discussing their mathematical investigation animatedly and enthusiastically.

Standards in the early years are declining. Children do not make sufficient progress from their starting points as their learning needs are not fully catered for and met. Although staff are now beginning to plan activities across all areas of learning, some activities lack appeal and children do not always participate. Children's needs and next steps are not fully understood. Staff's absence and the high frequency of temporary staffing arrangements have adversely affected children's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

During my last visit, pupils' attendance was declining, and absence was rising. This was highlighted as a concern. You are beginning to tighten up on all aspects of the school's registration procedures, including ensuring that staff are clear about which register codes to apply to different situations. This aspect has not been followed up thoroughly enough in the past. Persistent absence for some groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, remains too high. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation between underachievement for some groups of pupils and their poor

attendance, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. You are taking sensible steps and communicating your higher expectations regularly to families. For example, parents who have taken unauthorised leave this term, because of your recent correspondence, are now aware that the school will take action in the future if this pattern of attendance were to continue. Although it is too soon to see an impact on pupils' attendance, undoubtedly, you have set out your stall and are beginning to raise the bar.

In some classes, teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour remain too low. There are pockets of poor behaviour in lessons, particularly from older boys. Teachers are still struggling in some instances to make sure that poor behaviour does not escalate. On several occasions during the inspection, you were called to assist. Some pupils deliberately cause distraction, as learning tasks are either poorly matched to their abilities or simply lack appeal. Older pupils remain disappointed with the behaviour of their peers. For example, some Year 6 pupils noted that when holding a corridor door open to their classmates, very few said 'thank you'.

Children in the early years struggle to retain interest in the activities on offer. Boys particularly struggle to get hooked in to the reading, writing or number activities. Often, children play in the outdoor area for extended and lengthy periods with very little, or no, interaction with adults. Adults do not oversee activities with the necessary level of intent. As a result, interactions between adults and children are limited and short lived and fail to move children's learning on at the required rate.

Throughout the school, the attitude to pupils' safety is not vigilant enough. During my visit, we gathered up containers holding a variety of cleaning fluids that were left around the school, including in the early years. Cleaning solutions and chemicals, which should be stored securely, are far too accessible to pupils, including the youngest children.

Outcomes for pupils

Standards in the early years are declining. Unvalidated assessment information shows that, over the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has steadily decreased. Children do not make rapid enough progress from their starting points and their skills, particularly in writing, are underdeveloped. Consequently, too few children are starting key stage 1 with the level of skills and understanding typically expected for their age.

Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to underachieve. A recent review of the school's provision by the Oxfordshire School Inclusion Team described the progress of this group of pupils as of 'considerable concern.' Responsible stakeholders concur.

In 2018, more pupils in Year 2 achieved the standards expected for their age in

reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. Standards are beginning to rise, particularly in key stage 1. Year 2 teachers have forged positive relationships with pupils and are beginning to stimulate more enthusiastic attitudes to learning.

Unvalidated assessment information shows that strategies to support pupils in Year 6, to catch up and achieve the standards expected, have borne fruit. More Year 6 pupils, this year, achieved the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics than last year. However, efforts across the rest of key stage 2 have lacked the same intensity. As a result, many pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 continue to underachieve. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Pupils are still not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education, including those moving on to key stage 3. Too few of the most able pupils achieve their potential and very few exceed the standard expected for their age. Unvalidated information shows that the proportions of pupils exceeding age-related expectations are declining in reading, writing and mathematics at both key stages 1 and 2.

External support

As the responsible stakeholder, ODST personnel are not sparking improvement securely enough, nor with the required urgency. Disappointingly, there is some slippage, particularly regarding the school's approach to safeguarding. In other aspects, such as the school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, there has been no improvement over time. Pupils, particularly the disadvantaged, the most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are still underachieving.

ODST has established a satisfactory leadership structure for the summer term, bolstered by the support of a consultant. This plan has ensured that there is regular contact for parents and the school remains operational. However, strategic development has come to a standstill and any previous drive to instigate positive change has stalled. Over the last term, and with the absence of key senior leaders, the chief executive officer and other trust officers have provided intensified weekly support; for example, by undertaking learning walks. At a time when the school has struggled to sustain consistency in leadership, this was supportive. Nevertheless, while trust officers' increased presence is of use on a day-to-day basis, it is not having an impact on raising standards across the school.

As the school's two new headteachers, you are now sensibly taking stock, reviewing the level of support provided by ODST and other external partners. You know that despite support from consultants and advisers, the quality of teaching remains unchanged. You are clear that this must be the key focus for school improvement. You are adamant that the way forward is to provide greater clarity so that all stakeholders are clear about what is required, and by when.

