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12 March 2019

Mrs Gillian Standing and Mrs Anneka Fisher  
Co-Headteachers  
Wheatley Church of England Primary School  
Littleworth Road  
Wheatley  
Oxford  
Oxfordshire  
OX33 1NN

Dear Mrs Standing and Mrs Fisher

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Wheatley Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit with Christopher Crouch and Mary Ellen McCarthy, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 26 and 27 February 2019, 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 fifth 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 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 transitional governance committee, 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 February 2019**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, some jointly with the co-headteachers. Inspectors met with both of you, and other staff with significant responsibilities, including leaders with responsibility for writing and mathematics. A discussion was conducted with some class teachers. The lead inspector also met with the principal schools adviser from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST). A meeting was held with four members of the transitional governance committee (TGC), which acts as the school's governing body, including both co-chairs. The lead inspector also met with the diocesan education adviser, who also acts as the chair of the executive committee, which is part of the TGC.

An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day and met with eight pupils from Years 3 to 6. Inspectors 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**

The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), after a period of absence, left in December 2018. A local school, John Henry Newman Academy, which is also part of ODST, is providing SENCo support for two days a week, alongside additional support from Oxfordshire Schools Inclusion Team. The school continues to receive support from a range of advisers, including those specialising in the early years and mathematics, as well as the principal schools adviser from ODST.

A new deputy headteacher took up post in January 2019. The deputy headteacher holds responsibility for a Year 5 and Year 6 class. In December 2018, several staff left, including four part-time, job-share teachers and a full-time teacher with responsibility for a Year 3 and Year 4 class. Some staff who left held additional responsibilities including the leadership of mathematics and phonics. In January 2019, two new class teachers, one with responsibility for a Years 1 and 2 class and the other a Years 3 and 4, joined the school.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Very recently, and under your new leadership, the school has continued to improve in some respects. You have steadily built upon your positive start by continuing to establish much clearer systems and processes. For instance, policies, including those relating to equalities and anti-bullying, have now been introduced. Nevertheless, you know that until very recently many key statutory processes were not in place. This means that your work is still at an embryonic stage because of the need to make up for lost time. Staff are still adapting to your higher expectations

and getting used to new ways of working. This means that although there has been some improvement over the last two terms, particularly in key stage 1, some strategies are still at the very early stages. Trustees and governors are rightly disappointed that more has not been achieved since the last full inspection and agree that progress towards the removal of special measures has been too slow over time. Nevertheless, the systems and processes you are putting in place are appropriate, well-judged and much needed.

During your first two terms, you have coached and nurtured staff intensively to instigate improvement. Consequently, you have taken on other roles and responsibilities beyond those ordinarily associated with headship. For example, you have overseen subjects like mathematics, covered teaching and leadership arrangements in the early years and partially covered the SENCo role, alongside the part-time SENCo. While this has been helpful, it is also beginning to encroach upon the lines of accountability. Issues with staff underperformance are not always addressed as decisively as they could be. Nevertheless, with a more rigorous cycle of lesson monitoring in place, and an established performance management system, this is something that you are now in a more secure position to tackle. You know that for the school to improve quickly, the quality of teaching and learning requires rapid improvement. This is particularly the case in key stage 2.

Middle leadership has continued to develop gradually, and roles and responsibilities have been further clarified. However, progress has been limited, particularly as several key leaders, including those responsible for mathematics and phonics, left in December 2018. Nonetheless, relevant processes and procedures have been implemented to support middle leadership development. Some relevant actions, such as the monitoring of subjects, are now becoming more prevalent. Middle leaders feel well supported by the senior leadership team. They can describe, far more freely than in the past, the actions that they are taking to monitor their subjects. However, middle leaders are less certain about what difference their actions are making. Some, including those who are very new to their roles, have yet to exert an obvious influence on raising standards.

You acknowledge that for some considerable time the school has not met statutory requirements for the planning and accounting of the school's spending of additional funding. You have rightly prioritised this, making positive strides forward. Now there is a well-constructed plan for the spending of pupil premium. Under your leadership, and for the first time, key stakeholders are now better informed about the school's plans. This aspect is now in line with what is required. However, your analysis of disadvantaged pupils' performance shows that too little has been achieved. Many disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress for this group of pupils remains a cause for concern.

During your first two terms, you have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. This has taken precedence and means that work in other curriculum areas has yet to get

underway. The school's wider curriculum remains underdeveloped. Pupils' experiences of subjects such as history, geography and science are impeded as these are not taught regularly enough in all classes. Pupils have not received computing lessons in the past. You have begun to rectify this by purchasing a set of laptops and completing some useful work on e-safety with pupils. However, you know that this work is at an early stage and pupils have yet to put into practice what they have learned.

Keeping pupils safe has remained at the forefront of everyone's minds. Leaders' actions to address previous shortcomings have continued to take hold. Systems are now fully understood and followed with greater rigour than in the past. The school's designated safeguarding leads apply thresholds of concerns well and are tenacious in following up on cases where necessary. The school's work to keep pupils safe continues to be effective.

Trustees, including the principal schools adviser from ODST, have continued to monitor the school's work closely. Governors have also continued to support the school well. They make regular visits which are strongly aligned to school priorities. Governors have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They acknowledge that much more work is needed for standards to rise and for pupils to reach their potential. Since my last visit, governors have wisely paid closer attention to scrutinising the performance of groups. This is helpful. However, governors, too, know that key groups such as the disadvantaged and the most able pupils are not catching up quickly enough.

Steadily, you are gaining the full trust and support of the wider community. Greater parental engagement is highly evident, including at parent consultation evenings and other community events. Leaders are determined that parents are fully involved in shaping school procedures and there are regular opportunities for parents to contribute their ideas, for example in developing the school's accessibility plan. Parents say that the school is improving.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1 is steadily improving. Teachers are responding well to the support they have received. Now, classes are more settled as routines are becoming more established. The youngest pupils generally listen well, both to adults and each other, showing respect for one another's contributions. In key stage 1, warmer relationships between adults and pupils are coming to the fore. This is because everyone shares a clearer understanding of what is expected. However, the quality of teaching in key stage 2 has not improved so securely. Teachers' expectations remain too low. Pupils chatter unnecessarily and repeatedly lose focus on the task in hand. As a result, too few pupils are making the gains needed to overcome a legacy of underachievement.

Teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning is still at an early stage. The

challenges of planning for mixed-age range classes are still not fully understood. Planned sequences of learning do not always build well enough on pupils' prior learning. Sometimes pupils repeat things they already know. This is particularly the case in key stage 2. Pupils spend too long going over things they have already mastered, such as the use of adjectives when writing descriptively. Teachers do not move pupils on to new themes, or more sophisticated language devices, quickly enough. Sometimes, teachers' subject knowledge is too insecure.

Teaching assistants have benefited from useful training. They now offer more insightful support to pupils and ask helpful questions. The quality of support available to pupils is steadily improving. This is also the case in the early years. Here, adults engage more readily in conversation and are exploring children's learning more confidently than in the past.

Despite the absence of the early years leader, you have continued to ensure that this department improves. The learning environment is now more appealing. Resources are now better organised and planned tasks are much more attractive. As a result, children are increasingly able to sustain their engagement, sometimes without adult support. You have also ensured that there is a much richer menu of activities, including those that provide opportunities for children to express themselves creatively. There are more opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills, both indoors and outside. Nevertheless, you know that, despite these improvements, it is too soon to see the impact on children's outcomes.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

You have instigated and sustained significant improvement in pupils' attendance. Now, pupils attend school regularly and attendance is in line with that seen nationally. You have successfully addressed some pupils' poor attendance by introducing new procedures such as issuing warning notices when appropriate. Your raised expectations, alongside a revised approach, have had a noticeable impact. Absence is reducing, and more pupils now reach the level of attendance expected. You have kept this aspect at the forefront of everyone's minds by reporting on a weekly basis in the school's newsletter. Consequently, parents, too, have embraced the school's higher expectations, making sure that their children come to school regularly. This is helpful and has contributed to the sustained and rapid improvement to pupils' attendance.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving in key stage 1. They listen well and respond to adults' instructions. Nevertheless, some pupils have yet to develop self-assurance and full confidence to attack new learning independently. Many still require a good deal of reassurance and guidance to give of their best. In key stage 2, lessons are excessively dominated by chatter and low-level, off-task behaviour. Pupils are often slow to get started and struggle to retain enthusiasm and focus on the task in hand. This means that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

You have recently introduced a new anti-bullying policy. There are now much clearer systems in place for logging incidents and looking more closely at trends and patterns. Exclusions have risen marginally, although this is because of your higher expectations rather than a deterioration in pupils' behaviour. Last term, I reported on the new behaviour policy. This term, however, some staff are struggling to embed your expectations into their practice. In some classes, the tools you have equipped staff with are not fully implemented. In these classes, pupils' behaviour still requires improvement.

Across the school, the presentation of pupils' written work remains poor. Pupils do not take pride in their work and, in some classes, they are not expected to give their best. Work in some subjects, for example science and history, particularly in key stage 2, is poorly presented. Pupils' productivity in some classes remains too low.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

There are now more detailed systems for tracking the performance of pupils. However, you concede that standards are rising too slowly, and many pupils continue to underachieve. You have set aspirational targets but know that there is some way to go for these to be realised. Nevertheless, in key stage 1, standards are beginning to rise. More pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils in key stage 2 continue to underachieve. Many have continued to experience changeable teaching arrangements. Pupils' poor behaviour, particularly in the upper key stage, is still not conducive to effective learning. This hampers their progress in all subjects. Here, standards remain low.

The most able pupils are beginning to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. More are now working within age-related expectations. However, too few are achieving their potential and exceeding the standards expected for their age.

You and your governors have rightly increased your focus on the performance of disadvantaged pupils. There are now clearer plans in place. However, disadvantaged pupils make slower progress than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.

### **External support**

In recent times, ODST has sensibly commissioned more bespoke, external support, including support for the early years and an adviser who specialises in the accuracy of assessment information. This is helpful as both areas need improvement. Nevertheless, this work is at an early stage.

