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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Edward Anderson
Headteacher
St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby
Main Road
Willoughby
Alford
Lincolnshire
LN13 9NH

Dear Mr Anderson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of St Helena's Church of England Primary School, Willoughby

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 11 October 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other staff, governors and the local authority, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also carried out visits to lessons, held meetings with other staff and reviewed curriculum and school development documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that they identify the precise knowledge they want pupils to learn and when in the foundation subjects from the early years to Year 6; and

- ensure that systems and processes for managing the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are in place.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the senior leadership team and the governing body. The special educational needs coordinator and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body took up their posts in September 2023. These changes to the school's leadership have increased the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

You and your leaders have acted quickly to address some of the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. The school has sought advice from the local authority and the Department for Education. It has worked with these organisations to bring about necessary changes, including in relation to reading, the curriculum, the early years provision and the provision for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have ensured that long-term curriculum plans are in place for the foundation subjects. However, the school has yet to identify the most important knowledge that pupils should learn and when, from the early years to Year 6.

The school has prioritised reading. The teaching of phonics is implemented consistently. New books and a key stage 2 reading scheme have been purchased. Pupils read books that are right for them. They say that they love reading and enjoy completing the quizzes about the books they read. Teachers say the changes to the reading curriculum have helped them with their planning.

The school has introduced knowledge organisers for the foundation subjects to help pupils remember their learning. These will require time to become fully embedded. Teachers do not yet use assessment effectively in order to inform the next steps in pupils' learning in the foundation subjects.

Pupils can talk confidently about their current learning in the foundation subjects, for example their learning about famous people from the local area. They know basic facts about different religions. The school has ensured that the fundamental British values are taught through the curriculum. Older pupils know some of the fundamental British values and what they mean for them.

There has been much training for staff to help improve their understanding of how best to support pupils with SEND in their learning. These pupils get the support they need and enjoy learning alongside their peers in the classroom. Staff say that they feel better informed and have the confidence to adapt their teaching to support these pupils' needs. The process by which the needs of pupils with SEND are identified and the right support put in place is not yet fully established to ensure that the provision that these pupils receive is as effective as it could be. Not all of these pupils are set targets that are sufficiently ambitious to help them to achieve their best.

There is an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas still to improve. All staff and leaders possess the drive to bring about the necessary improvement. Regular checks take place to ensure the impact of the work to bring about improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Anita Denman
His Majesty's Inspector