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Andrew Frolish
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Frolish

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Stoke-by-Nayland Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 May 2022, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in October 2021. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school continues to be inadequate. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement/action plan(s) are fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer or equivalent of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan multi-academy trust, the director

of education for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 May 2022

Context

There is currently an executive headteacher who supports the school for two days a week. From September 2022, the head of school will take up the post of substantive headteacher.

There are several new members of the local governing body, including an experienced chair of governors who started in September 2021. Staff absence was high due to COVID-19 for a short period in the spring term. As a result, pupils learned online at home.

The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

Leaders' efforts to secure improvement are having a positive effect. There is drive and ambition to not only address weaknesses but to strengthen the quality of provision further. The school's action plan for improvement identifies the urgent priorities. It gives clear measures of how and when these priorities will be achieved. Governors and the trust make regular checks on progress against their action plan targets. Governors have reflected upon how they can carry out their role better. They have strengthened their monitoring role. They visit the school regularly to see first-hand the changes that are being made. External consultants and trust leaders provide information to governors to help ensure that there is a secure understanding of the progress that is being made. Governors are well placed to continue to support and challenge leaders through their improvement journey.

Leaders have thought carefully about the design of the curriculum so that it suits the needs of the pupils and the context of the school. They have addressed the weaknesses seen at the last inspection. Leaders have made sure that teachers revisit the key knowledge they want pupils to know and learn. There are explicit links across subjects to help pupils make connections and a sustained focus on key subject vocabulary. Pupils confirm that they are taught these 'big ideas' in lessons and that they have a clear understanding about what they are learning.

Planning of the curriculum is almost complete. Leaders are in the process of implementing many of their plans. The approach to religious education is being showcased across the trust. Leaders have amended the amount of time dedicated to subjects so pupils study them more often. For example, pupils now have weekly science teaching.

While leaders have made inroads to strengthen the curriculum, they are still working on the consistency of teaching. This is particularly the case with the teaching of phonics. Leaders have adopted a new systematic phonics programme. Staff have received training. However, they are still getting to grips with implementing the programme. When phonics teaching works well, teachers explicitly teach pupils how to decode and read accurately. Subsequently, pupils use their phonics knowledge to help them in their writing. When it

does not work well, pupils become confused about their sounds and struggle to work out unfamiliar words and how they write them.

Pupils are now reading books that match their ability and, as a result, are gaining confidence when reading aloud. They are using appropriate strategies to decode. There is less reliance on picture clues, and pupils no longer just guess the words. The rewards scheme for increasing the amount of reading pupils are doing is working well. Parents and pupils alike spoke highly of the scheme and the difference it is making. Leaders' focus has been upon improving the teaching of reading in Reception. Children's early reading experience in Nursery remains weak. It lacks a clear, coherent approach. Teachers' planning for activities linked to early reading in Nursery are ad hoc.

Behaviour is improving. Leaders have made sure that children in early years have established routines. For example, children line up in the playground before they sensibly enter the building. Children now have many resources to use and outside play equipment. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 sit patiently listening to the teacher, putting their hands up to speak, in line with the school's policy. Older pupils report that behaviour is much better in lessons. However, teachers are not consistently following the school's agreed approach. Not all teachers are using the key words, such as 'focus', to help pupils know when to improve their behaviour. On occasion, teachers are too accepting of lower standards than leaders now expect. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more work to do in this area for the quality of behaviour to be consistently better across the school.

Staff are happy. They feel well supported by governors and trust leaders.

Additional support

Trust leaders identified the significant weaknesses in the quality of the school's provision prior to the last inspection. They responded quickly by ensuring they appointed an experienced headteacher to provide support during the appointment of a new headteacher. They also undertook a series of reviews to inform improvement and action plans. Leaders and teachers are benefiting from wide-ranging support from trust leaders and other schools. There are close links with other schools in the multi-academy trust. Teachers have made visits to other providers to help inform their practice. The local English hub is also supporting the development and delivery of the phonics programme.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. Meetings were held with the head of school improvement from the trust, several members of the local governing body, the executive headteacher and the head of school. The inspector also met with pupils and listened to pupils read. The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day.