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Matt Boyle
Head of School
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Dear Mr Boyle

Special measures monitoring inspection of Masham CofE VA Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 29 and 30 January 2025, 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 was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in January 2024.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and (where applicable) provision judgements, 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 senior leaders, staff, the interim executive board, the diocese 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 visited lessons, held meetings with other staff and spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. 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 no longer be judged as requiring special measures.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

Since the previous inspection, the school has taken steps to address key areas for improvement. This has been driven by an interim leadership team and interim executive board. There is a commitment to the school's improvement journey. The local authority and diocese are providing significant support to ensure the school is providing a better quality of education for pupils. The restructuring of the mixed-age classes has contributed to this positive trajectory. Staffing turnover has meant a strong reliance on external support. The school is taking the right actions to address its weaknesses. However, there remains more work to be done to ensure that all pupils receive the high-quality education they need to be ready for the next stages of learning.

This academic year, the school has introduced a more structured and ambitious curriculum across all subjects. The school has invested in commercial curriculum schemes that provide breadth and well-sequenced lessons. The school has given careful thought to lesson structure to provide pupils with opportunities to revisit prior learning. Some older pupils have large gaps in their knowledge, particularly in mathematics. The school is still developing ways to address this. Ongoing professional development and new systems to check pupils' understanding are underway. The school now prioritises supporting pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn and remember the knowledge set out in the curriculum. However, this curriculum journey is in its infancy. The school recognises that more work is needed to ensure the curriculum is consistently well delivered.

The school has made progress with the teaching of early reading. Pupils now learn to read more quickly and with greater fluency. The school has worked closely with external support to strengthen the approach to teaching phonics. This is having a positive impact. The school has instilled excitement in sharing stories in the early years. For older pupils, the school has developed the reading curriculum and range of books available. Pupils receive regular practice to develop their reading comprehension skills.

The school has introduced a new policy with the aim of providing more timely feedback to pupils. This is having a positive impact on staff workload. However, as with other changes, this is in its infancy and is not consistently applied. This means for some pupils their misconceptions are addressed later than they should be. This is an area the school is still developing.

The provision for pupils with SEND has developed since the previous inspection. With external support, the school has improved how it identifies pupils' needs and manages their support plans. As a result, there is a clearer understanding of the precise support pupils with SEND require. However, the school now needs to develop how support for these pupils is applied in lessons. Not all staff receive the necessary training to provide targeted and effective support.

There is a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour throughout the school. The introduction of a new behaviour policy and clearer expectations has helped create a more structured and settled learning environment. Parents and carers describe the behaviour culture as 'transformed'. There is a positive atmosphere in school. Pupils are confident that any poor behaviour will be addressed. Pupils are engaged in lessons and respond well to routines. Attendance has also improved. The school now has a more rigorous approach to addressing absence and lateness.

Those responsible for governance have played a significant role in monitoring the school's progress. They understand and fulfil their role well. They have a sharp understanding of the key improvement areas and an accurate picture of the school's performance.

Safeguarding was found to be effective at the time of the previous inspection. The school has since strengthened the safeguarding systems in school. Regular audits, improvements to site safety and staff training have improved the safeguarding culture in school.

The arrangements for external support have been crucial in improving the school. The school is benefiting from ongoing challenge and oversight. The school is developing its leadership capacity to ensure progress is embedded and sustained. However, the school recognises there is still more work to do ensure staff well-being and workload is maintained as a priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Georgina Chinaka
His Majesty's Inspector