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Mrs E Stiles
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stiles

Special measures monitoring inspection of Cherry Willingham Community School

Following my visit to your school on 15–16 December, 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 which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2015.

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.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hollingsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2015

- Ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements by:
 - updating the school’s safeguarding policy so that it is in line with current legislation, and provides adequate information to staff on how to identify and report their concerns
 - making clear the roles and responsibilities of all staff, including that of the designated safeguarding lead
 - providing appropriate support to enable staff with safeguarding duties to carry out their roles effectively
 - developing appropriate arrangements which set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information between the staff at the school, with other professionals, and with the local authority safeguarding children board
 - developing clear and robust recording and reporting arrangements, which are then followed rigorously by all staff.
- Implement more effective systems to enable pupils to share with the staff any concerns they may have about their safety and that of others.
- Ensure that the governing body carries out its duties effectively in relation to safeguarding.
- Ensure that all staff have the skills and confidence to address minor instances of disruption from a minority of students who interfere with learning.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 15–16 December 2015

Evidence

The lead inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and heads of year, members of the governing body and two representatives of an educational consultancy providing support services for the local authority. The lead inspector also met members of the teaching and support staff. The lead inspector observed five lessons, three of which were joint observations with a deputy headteacher. The headteacher also completed a learning walk with the lead inspector. The lead inspector met with pupils from all year groups, both formally and informally, including at the beginning of the school day and during breaktime and lunchtime, when he observed pupils' behaviour. The lead inspector evaluated the impact of the school's actions since the last inspection on personal development, behaviour and welfare and the effectiveness of leadership and management, in line with the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report.

Context

The governing body has reduced in size from 13 members to seven. The school has appointed three pastoral support officers to assist heads of houses. The school is currently investigating becoming an academy as part of a multi-academy trust.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Senior leaders have been swift to ensure that the school has developed a culture of listening to pupils and acting upon any concerns that they may have, particularly those related to safety, bullying and pupils' welfare. Senior leaders, for example, have engaged directly with all pupils to establish areas of the school where they may not feel safe and have taken appropriate steps to act on these concerns. To enable pupils to share with staff any concerns they may have, pupils have been asked to identify three members of staff they can speak to. To increase the school's capacity to support vulnerable pupils and those who are experiencing difficulties, the school has appointed three pastoral support officers to assist the heads of year. Through these actions, senior leaders have made listening to pupils and catering for their needs a clear priority. Nearly all pupils who met with the lead inspector reported that they could speak to members of staff where they had concerns and that they were confident that these concerns would be dealt with. No pupils could identify an area of the school where they felt unsafe. Some pupils attributed this to the swift action that senior leaders had taken to resolve pupils' earlier concerns, particularly by installing extra CCTV cameras.

Pupils' understanding of factors that can affect their welfare has improved as a result of a greater focus on studying spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues in registration time and during 'Subject Immersion Days'. Subject Immersion Days are days where pupils consider issues relating to the wider world in which they live and the school community in which they study. Senior leaders have introduced these days since the last inspection. In the first Subject Immersion Day, pupils considered bullying, mental health, unhealthy relationships and online safety, with workshops run by external agencies. Consequently, pupils are more aware of how to keep safe and what actions they should take where they experience difficulties.

Senior leaders have taken effective action to address pupils' concerns about bullying. In registration time, pupils have comprehensively considered what constitutes bullying and its effects on victims. As a consequence, they have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, particularly physical, verbal, homophobic and cyber bullying. Displays in classrooms and in school corridors promote a strong anti-bullying message and inform pupils of actions they should take if they are being bullied. Pupils themselves have created some of these displays, including the powerful 'hands up to bullying' artwork. Senior leaders have provided a room for pupils to go to in order to receive support if they have any concerns about bullying. The school is also currently training selected staff and pupils to act as mentors to support victims of bullying. Because of these actions, concerns about bullying that were present at the last inspection are now less prevalent. Nearly all pupils that the lead inspector met during the inspection reported that teachers and senior leaders dealt effectively with any concerns they may have about bullying. Senior leaders keep comprehensive records of instances of bullying, detailing the support the victim receives and the guidance given to the bully to alter their behaviour. These records demonstrate that teachers deal with bullying effectively and that there has been a reduction in the number of incidents during the autumn term.

Teachers have received training to ensure that they are more effective in challenging instances of disruption to lessons. Where staff have difficulty in managing pupils' behaviour, senior leaders have provided appropriate support. Senior leaders have also begun to create a culture of higher expectations among pupils. They have used assemblies to reinforce for pupils what is acceptable behaviour. As a consequence, instances of low-level disruption have reduced. Pupils that the lead inspector met formally and informally reported that behaviour had improved. They attributed this improvement to the higher expectations of the senior leaders as well as greater consistency on the part of teachers in challenging poor behaviour. The lead inspector did not see any evidence of low-level disruption in those lessons he visited.

Behaviour around the school site during social times is appropriate. Pupils move between school buildings calmly and show fellow pupils, staff and visitors respect,

including holding doors open. Staff are present during social times to supervise pupil behaviour. As a consequence, pupils conduct themselves well at these times.

Attendance at the school for all pupils continues to be in line with national levels, while the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent is reducing. This is a consequence of the school's effective systems to monitor absence, particularly of those pupils who are regularly absent. The school's attendance officer works closely with heads of year and an external attendance consultant in monitoring pupils' absence and makes contact with parents to share the school's concerns where necessary.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to bring about improvement. They have consulted with external advisers in drawing up an action plan which is sharply focused on the areas for improvement identified by the report. This action plan contains precise outcomes and an effective means by which senior leaders and governors can evaluate the impact of the school's actions. Senior leaders work closely with governors to evaluate the impact of the actions senior leaders have taken and to consider next steps. This has allowed both senior leaders and governors to have a clear understanding of the progress the school is making in resolving the issues raised in the previous inspection report. Consequently, senior leaders have made significant progress in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are robust, pupils feel safe and staff are able to deal with instances of low-level disruption.

Senior leaders have swiftly addressed the shortcomings in the school's safeguarding procedures. The school's safeguarding policy now meets statutory requirements. It makes clear that keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. The policy provides staff and other adults with comprehensive information relating to identifying and reporting concerns. The staff handbook, a copy of which is in every classroom, reinforces this guidance. Consequently, staff are aware of their responsibilities and understand how to pass on any disclosures pupils may make to them.

Staff have received training related to safeguarding. All staff have read the latest government guidance relating to safeguarding and have completed training on child abuse and neglect, bullying, domestic abuse and preventing radicalisation and extremism. Staff have also received training regarding sharing information relating to safeguarding concerns. Staff are aware, for example, of the member of staff and of the governing body to whom they should pass any concerns that they may have relating to the conduct of adults towards children.

The headteacher and two pastoral support officers have completed appropriate safeguarding training in order to ensure the work of the designated safeguarding lead is more robust. Similar training for the deputy headteacher is imminent. Consequently, a wider range of staff now understand the roles and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead, and the school has greater capacity to respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns.

Senior leaders have reviewed the forms which staff complete to record and pass on information regarding pupils' concerns relating to their welfare and bullying. These changes have ensured that staff record pupils' concerns in detail and pass the information on promptly to the designated safeguarding lead. These forms allow senior leaders and governors to track the actions taken by the designated senior lead and monitor any referrals to external agencies. The lead inspector scrutinised examples of referrals the school has recently made. These indicated that the designated safeguarding lead takes prompt action, makes timely referrals where appropriate and follows up any referrals where she feels that the external agency has been slow to respond.

The governor with responsibility for safeguarding regularly completes checks to ensure that the school's actions and policies meet statutory requirements and best meet pupils' needs. The governor has suggested improvements, and senior leaders have acted upon these immediately. Governors have also received training from the local authority in relation to safeguarding.

The governing body has responded robustly to the previous inspection report and has undertaken timely action to resolve the concerns that were raised. The external review recommended in the previous inspection report has been undertaken and governors have responded appropriately to the feedback provided. In particular, governors have been quick to ensure that they focus sharply on the areas for improvement, evaluating the impact of actions that senior leaders have taken. Consequently, governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas where performance is below expectations. They provide support to senior leaders, but also offer appropriate challenge through their regular core meetings. Governors frequently meet with pupils to find out their views of the school. This allows them to confirm the information provided by senior leaders at core meetings.

Senior leaders have completed a comprehensive review of the school's behaviour policy and are about to introduce a new system that focuses on positive behaviour. Preparations for this system have been thorough, including engaging with the views of staff, pupils and parents as well as visiting other schools where this system currently operates. Pupils and staff who met with the lead inspector spoke positively about the new system and recognise how this could impact favourably upon behaviour, pupils' learning and the wider community's perception of the school.

The headteacher has ensured that responding to pupils' views is at the very heart of the school's actions. Senior leaders have consulted with pupils regarding issues relating to their safety and have responded effectively to the concerns pupils have raised. The school council has also been reconvened to provide pupils with a further means to communicate their views. Senior leaders, for example, consulted with the school council to decide the rewards for the new behaviour policy.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- Senior leaders have taken swift action to resolve shortcomings in the school's safeguarding procedures. These are now in line with statutory requirements.
- All staff are now clear about their responsibilities regarding keeping children safe and responding to any concerns pupils may raise. The work completed by the designated safeguarding lead is now more robust.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in the school and that they have staff they can speak to if they have concerns. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with these concerns effectively.
- Senior leaders have raised their expectations regarding pupils' behaviour and staff have received training in dealing with low-level disruption. As a consequence, behaviour in lessons has improved.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the work which senior leaders have completed in response to the concerns raised by the previous inspection. Governors provide the necessary support and challenge to ensure that the actions taken by senior leaders are correctly focused on bringing about the necessary improvement. Governors regularly check the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- Staff are very positive about the improvements that have taken place to ensure that pupils feel safe and communicate their concerns. The staff who met with the lead inspector felt strongly that they are part of a team and that senior leaders support them in meeting their responsibilities relating to keeping pupils safe and challenging poor behaviour.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- Exclusions remain too high. The number of fixed-term exclusions and the number of pupils who are excluded more than once remain above national levels. Senior leaders are aware of the need to reduce the level of exclusions. The school does provide comprehensive support for those pupils who are at risk of exclusion. Pastoral support officers have received training to support pupils who have joined the school during the previous academic year, particularly those pupils whose behaviour does not meet the school's expectations.
- There are still some inconsistencies in how teachers manage pupils' behaviour. Senior leaders and governors are confident that the new behaviour policy will

ensure greater consistency. The headteacher will monitor this closely and will challenge staff who do not meet expectations.

- Some pupils still feel reluctant to share any concerns they may have with staff. Consequently, senior leaders recognise that they must further develop the strategies they have put into place since the last inspection to ensure that all pupils feel listened to and feel that they can share their concerns.
- There is some inconsistency with which teachers use the daily registration time to allow pupils to consider factors that affect their well-being. Consequently, not all pupils are able to take full advantage of the opportunities that the school provides for them to consider their well-being.

External support

The school receives regular and timely support from an Education Adviser and an Associate Education Adviser contracted by the local authority. This support has included providing training for governors, attending governor core meetings and completing regular reviews of the school's action plan. Senior leaders and governors have valued this support and have been able to build successfully on the advice and guidance these advisers have provided. The advisers have clear plans to widen their support to include monitoring the quality of teaching and the impact this has on achievement, including providing support to raise achievement in the core subjects.