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Ms Wendy Marriott
The Advisory Headteacher
St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School
Windmill Close
Bristol
BS3 4DP

Dear Ms Marriott

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Andrew Watters HMI to your school on 16 and 17 March 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Diocese of Bristol and the Strategic Director, Children, Young People and Skills for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Improve teaching and learning and the curriculum in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their achievement by:
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations and challenge all pupils
 - improving the balance of lessons so there is less teacher talk and more pupil involvement in practical activities
 - providing activities that engage and motivate pupils.
- Improve the use of assessment information so that teachers can take responsibility for the progress of pupils in their care by:
 - assessing pupils' attainment levels accurately
 - making sure staff use assessment information to tailor activities to meet the full range of pupils' needs.
- Embed ambition and accelerate the pace of school improvement by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels, together with the governing body, play a full part in:
 - monitoring the school's work, especially teaching and learning
 - identifying improvement priorities
 - evaluating the impact of their actions to raise attainment and achievement.
- Raise attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 March 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the advisory headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and the learning mentor, the Vice Chair of the Interim Executive Board and two representatives from the local authority. An inspector also met with a group of Year 6 pupils. Sixteen lessons were observed.

Context

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, the school was being led by an interim headteacher. She returned to her substantive post at the end of February. An advisory headteacher who is directly employed by the local authority took up post two weeks ago and will lead the school for the foreseeable future. One teacher left at the end of December.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Pupils' learning and the progress that pupils make in lessons are too variable. In a few lessons during this inspection, pupils were enthused and engaged by what they were doing, and made good progress, deepening their understanding and practising new skills. However, this does not happen often enough. In too many lessons, pupils' progress was satisfactory or inadequate; therefore underachievement is not being eradicated. A number of factors contribute to this. First, the match of work to pupils' prior learning is not precise enough. This means that pupils capable of high attainment are often not challenged and mark time. It also means that lower attaining pupils can struggle, because the work is too hard for them to tackle on their own. Second, teachers' knowledge of the precise levels pupils are working at is not secure. Although teachers have begun to identify indicative levels on their lesson plans, which is a positive step, the plans do not focus sufficiently on what pupils need to do next to move them on. Learning objectives tend to state what the pupils are going to do, for example 'write a recount' or 'solve subtraction problems'. These objectives are not specific enough to guide planning, because they could be equally applicable to pupils in all year groups. Neither do they indicate to pupils what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Finally, expectations are sometimes too low and teachers underestimate the pupils' capabilities.

The school has adopted the local authority's system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress. It is a sophisticated tool which enables teachers to look at the performance of different groups, individuals and cohorts. However, the school has been slow to add assessments of pupils' attainment to this system, and there are doubts about the accuracy of what has been recorded. Much of the school's

assessment information remains inaccurate and is not a reliable indicator of pupils' rates of progress.

It is clear that pupils want to learn. They listen and respond positively to their teachers, although their concentration can sometimes wander if they have to listen for too long and their work is either too easy or too difficult. They get on willingly with independent work and cooperate well with one another.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour in lessons was never less than satisfactory, and often it was good. The pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming.

Attendance rates continue to show a steady improvement and the school is not far short of its target for the year. The attendance of individual pupils is closely monitored and good attendance is celebrated and rewarded.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

There is still too much variation in the quality of teaching and too little that is of the good quality that is needed to boost pupils' achievement at a sufficiently rapid rate. Overall, teaching is stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, and it is variable in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The teachers are keen to improve their practice. They seek feedback from observations of their lessons and act on guidance that they receive in staff meetings and from other practitioners. There are some strengths; for example, in both Year 5 classes the pupils thoroughly enjoyed their lessons in mathematics during this inspection because the work was well matched to their abilities and made them think. The Nursery classroom is a bright and stimulating environment and the activities provided reflect the teacher's skilful and creative planning. Teachers routinely tell the pupils what they need to do to be successful in lessons. However, taken overall, there has not been the substantial improvement that is required in teaching across the board and the school has not met the realistic targets for improving the quality of teaching that were set out in the original action plan. In many classrooms, there is very little display and celebration of pupils' work and achievement. Pupils have targets that are pasted into the front of their books, but there is little indication that progress towards them is being tracked either by the teachers or the pupils.

Weaknesses in assessment systems and procedures underpin many of the weaknesses in teaching. Teachers have begun to meet with senior staff to discuss the progress of pupils in their class, but because little work has been done to ensure the accuracy of assessments, there is limited evidence of the benefit of these

meetings. The need to set an accurate baseline from which future progress can be measured and to inform teachers' lesson planning has not been tackled with sufficient urgency.

Some steps have been taken to identify key skills that will form part of a revised curriculum, but slow progress is being made in taking this work forward.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching, learning and the curriculum – inadequate
- improve the use of assessment information – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The change of leadership understandably caused some anxiety among staff and parents, but the advisory headteacher took swift action to form positive working relationships with both groups. A number of teachers said that they appreciate the guidance that she is giving on planning and on teaching following informal visits to classrooms. The interim headteacher did a good deal of work to make sure that procedures for performance management were clarified and strengthened. Staff now have up-to-date job descriptions, but not all have yet agreed to them.

The senior leadership team does not play the part that it should in making improvements. There is no shared view of what must be achieved in order to improve the quality of education and be removed from special measures, nor of the urgency with which such improvements are required. Senior leaders can speak of action that they have taken, but cannot point to the impact of it. There is little sense of responsibility, or of accountability. Senior leaders have had limited impact on improving teaching and learning, in part because the leadership structure does not facilitate this and in part because their understanding of how they might do this is not secure.

The interim executive board continues to be closely involved with the school and meets frequently to review progress. The part that it plays in strategic leadership is not clear to all parties, however. Steps that the interim executive board takes henceforth must be firmly rooted in the need to secure a sound base for future improvement and to ensure that the school's resources are deployed to best effect to meet the needs of the pupils.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- embed ambition and accelerate the pace of school improvement – inadequate.

External support

Following the last inspection, the local authority ensured that external support provided to the school was targeted more strategically. The local authority has also ensured a smooth handover from the interim headteacher to the advisory headteacher. The school's progress is regularly reviewed and accurate judgements

made; the findings from this inspection mirror those of a review carried out recently by the School Improvement Partner. Although the local authority is taking appropriate steps, it has as yet had insufficient impact on the school's rate of improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- The local authority, in partnership with the advisory headteacher and the interim executive board, must produce a plan of action to tackle the weaknesses in the school's organisation and leadership. The plan should include a clear indication of roles and responsibilities, set measurable and time-limited targets and indicate how leaders and staff at all levels will be accountable for improvements. The plan should be submitted to HMI by 8 April 2011.

This inspection has raised serious concerns about the rate of improvement, which could affect the timing of the next monitoring visit.