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8 July 2011

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

Dear Ms Marriott

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

Following my visit with Christine Field, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 July 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 third 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 – good.

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 third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the advisory headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, a group of teachers, the vice-chair of the interim executive board, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority.

Context

There have been several changes in staffing since the last monitoring inspection. Three teachers have left and three further members of teaching staff will leave at the end of this term. Three classes are currently taught by supply teachers. The advisory headteacher continues to lead the school. For the past two months she has been supported by the deputy headteacher of a successful school in the local authority who has been seconded to St Mary Redcliffe as an associate headteacher. A teaching and learning consultant from the local authority is providing temporary leadership for special educational needs work. The interim executive board has elected a new chair following the resignation of the previous incumbent.

The substantive headteacher has begun a phased return to work in another school, and will resume her post at St Mary Redcliffe from the start of the next academic year. Experienced teachers have been recruited to all vacancies and the school year will begin with a full complement of permanent staff.

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

Important steps forward have been taken since the last monitoring inspection. The school finally has robust information about pupils' attainment and progress in all year groups. Assessments have been rigorously checked to ensure that they are accurate and there is now a clear picture of how well pupils are doing.

The results of national tests taken by pupils in Year 6 have very recently become available, although they are as yet unvalidated. The results show that the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 has increased a little in English and more substantially in mathematics and is just above the proportion achieved nationally last year. The proportion reaching higher levels has also increased, again more markedly in mathematics. At Year 2, the teachers' assessments show an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining a secure Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics; however, the results in writing show that attainment in that aspect of English remains low. Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are particularly low with only around one quarter of the children reaching a good level of

development in their personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy.

In other year groups the proportion of pupils working at the level expected for their age is variable. Attainment in reading is generally higher than in writing and mathematics; in some year groups only about two thirds of pupils have reached the level expected for their age in writing and/or mathematics.

The school is now in a stronger position to be able to measure rates of progress. Taken overall, pupils' progress over the past three months has been at least satisfactory and they are beginning to make up lost ground. This is confirmed by observations in classrooms which showed that pupils are more frequently making good progress in lessons.

Pupils in Year 6 have made the progress expected of them across Key Stage 2. Some of this is attributable to successful booster sessions for targeted groups of pupils. The school now needs to ensure that pupils in all year groups, from the Nursery onwards, continue to make progress at a satisfactory or better rate. In particular, pupils' progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 must accelerate in order to raise attainment and to place pupils on a much firmer footing at the start of Key Stage 2.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

As at previous monitoring inspections, the pupils' behaviour was generally good. In lessons, pupils responded well to their teachers and concentrated on their work. When talking to inspectors, pupils were polite, friendly and articulate.

Attendance rates have continued to improve and are now broadly in line with last year's national figure. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced substantially.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is improving; observations during this inspection confirmed the school's monitoring records which show that inadequate teaching is very infrequent and the proportion of good teaching is growing. This is as a result of a range of strategies including coaching and modelling, clear systems and structures, explicit expectations and frequent informal 'drop-ins' to lessons, with brief written feedback that gives teachers pointers for improvement. There has been a noticeable improvement in teachers' morale and as a group teachers are becoming more open and reflective practitioners. They report that meetings at which the progress of their

pupils is discussed and next steps determined are especially helpful. Teaching assistants make a good contribution in many lessons, working well with small groups of pupils who require specific support. During this inspection, some teachers were observed using questioning particularly effectively to probe pupils' understanding and to challenge them to think deeply. The teachers' knowledge of levels of attainment of pupils in their class is more secure which means that the match of tasks to pupils' learning needs is more accurate. There is a growing understanding of the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, for example, those eligible for free school meals or who speak English as an additional language. Middle and phase leaders are developing their skills in using the assessment information to diagnose where best to target efforts to bring about improvements.

The pupils say that they have far more frequent opportunities for educational trips and visits which, understandably, they are very pleased about. From September, the school will implement a commercially devised curriculum for the foundation subjects, adapted to reflect the needs of pupils at St Mary Redcliffe. Staff are in the process of being trained to implement it effectively. This approach to the curriculum is being adopted in several schools in Bristol and links are being made with them, in order to share experiences and expertise.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The pace of improvement has speeded up remarkably since the last monitoring inspection, enabling the school to make up much of the ground that was lost earlier. Much of this is attributable to the work of the advisory headteacher. She has consummate skills in managing people and change and has brought about a transformation in the school's ethos and culture. Staff are now enthused and optimistic about the future, sharing the desire to improve quickly. They appreciate the systems and processes that have been established that enable them to do their jobs more effectively. Importantly, they feel that they now have a contribution to make and that it is valued. 'We were voiceless before, but now we are heard,' said one teacher. The advisory headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and her evaluations of progress are astute and honest.

The restructured leadership team is partly in place and will be complete at the start of the new academic year. Those members currently in post have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and of their accountability for pupils' learning and progress. The revised structure appropriately spreads leadership more widely, providing firm foundations on which to build the capacity for sustained

improvement. Members of phase teams feel that there is a much sharper focus on matters pertinent to their year groups in meetings and that time is not wasted.

The interim executive board has provided a good deal of support, and played a leading role during the process of recruiting the team of new staff. The recruitment process was rigorous and thorough. Members of the board are closely involved in school life and highly committed to seeing recent improvements continue. There is a good balance now between holding the school to account and contributing to the drive for improvement.

At the start of this inspection two parents presented the inspectors with a letter, signed by 100 parents and carers, stating how pleased they are with the improvements they are seeing at the school and in their children's learning and progress.

There will be further substantial changes at the start of the new academic year, with the return of the substantive headteacher and the arrival of six new members of staff. The interim executive board, local authority and advisory headteacher are acutely aware that this will be a challenging time and that the transition must be seamless. Despite the impressive improvements over the past three months, progress since the inspection in May 2010 has been insufficient and the school is not yet where it should be on its journey out of special measures. It is vitally important that the pace of change does not slip while new people get to grips with the tasks remaining to be done. The interim executive board and the local authority have an important part to play in ensuring that forward momentum continues and the capacity for sustained improvement is demonstrated.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- embed ambition and accelerate the pace of improvement – outstanding.

External support

The local authority acted swiftly and decisively following the feedback from the previous monitoring inspection. Its plan of action was suitable and was quickly and successfully implemented. The local authority is providing the school with a high degree of very effective support, in particular through the services of the advisory headteacher but also through the work of other consultants and the seconded deputy headteacher.