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1 June 2012

Ms Amanda Hough
Headteacher
St Luke's CofE Primary School
Cookham Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 7EG

Dear Ms Hough

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Luke's CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Miranda Perry, additional inspector, to your school on 30 and 31 May 2012, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2012. 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

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Windsor and Maidenhead.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - introducing rigorous assessment procedures to ensure early identification of pupils' needs and measuring the effectiveness of any interventions
 - using assessment information to plan effective lessons which match pupils' abilities and provide suitable challenge
 - ensuring good practice is shared and applied consistently throughout the school.
- Improve teaching so that all pupils make at least the expected progress in English and mathematics by:
 - rigorously monitoring lessons and providing developmental feedback and training to teachers so that expectations are raised and consistency is established
 - making sure that marking always shows pupils how to improve and there are opportunities for them to respond to teachers' feedback
 - improving the acquisition of communication skills through planning exciting activities that specifically identify key vocabulary to be learned.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - developing rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school
 - establishing a strategic vision for the school so that there is a culture of ambition and whole-school consistency in the drive to raise attainment
 - ensuring that the governing body undertakes training so that it can fulfil its statutory role and hold leaders to account for the school's outcomes
 - implement rigorous and effective performance management procedures for all staff.
- Improve behaviour and attendance by:
 - ensuring the new behaviour policy is consistently applied and evaluating its impact through establishing systems to log incidents and outcomes so that poor behaviour and racial bullying are eradicated
 - analysing patterns of absence and taking effective action so that attendance is improved to the national average by December 2012.

Special measures: monitoring of St Luke's CofE Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 30–31 May 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority. In addition, inspectors had informal conversations with pupils in classes and around the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, four teachers have resigned. There are five supply teachers working with the school until permanent staff can begin in September 2012. A member of staff is on long-term leave for health reasons.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils enter the school with levels of skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children continue to make good progress. For older pupils, school data indicate that attainment remains below the national average with mathematics remaining a particular concern. It is too early to see the impact of the recent initiatives to tackle pupils' underachievement in this subject. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' progress and achievement vary in lessons because of the variability in the quality of teaching. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' progress is uneven; it is satisfactory in some year groups and in others it is inadequate. However, analysis of the school's assessment information, pupils' workbooks and lesson observations reveal some pupils in Years 2 and 6 are starting to make improved progress in their levels of literacy. In the majority of classes, pupils' work is regularly marked and in a few classes, for example Year 2 and Year 5 and 6 classes, this is starting to help guide pupils towards improving their own work. In classes where teaching is less effective, pupils do not have secure understanding of what they need to do in order to make more rapid progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics – inadequate.

The quality of teaching

School leaders have begun a rigorous drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection reflected an improving trend in the quality of teaching; however, there is still inadequate teaching. In more effective teaching, tasks are explained well to the pupils and followed up with

individual advice and progress checks throughout the lesson. Activities are practical and engage and motivate pupils. There are high expectations of behaviour and teachers use praise well to promote good attitudes to learning.

This improving picture is not the norm yet, however, as in too many lessons, teachers are not always skilled in planning learning that challenges pupils in their thinking and do not readily adapt tasks if pupils do not respond as expected. Through meetings to discuss the progress of their pupils, the teachers now have a much clearer picture of what pupils already know and are able to do. Lessons are more thoroughly planned, but the success with which these plans are implemented is often hampered by shortcomings that curtail progress. For example, in some lessons, explanations lack sufficient clarity to ensure that the pupils gain a very clear understanding of what they are learning. Too much of the work involves the pupils listening to the teacher rather than engaging in sharply defined 'thinking and doing' activities. The support offered by teaching assistants is variable, with some supportive and sensitive work for pupils with additional needs but also some examples of passivity and disengagement particularly during the introductions to lessons. There is insufficient focus on key vocabulary, or on explaining terminology. Teachers' use of questioning to promote pupils' learning and progress is inconsistent. Although, in the odd instance, there is good use of questioning to probe pupils' learning and to ensure that they express themselves as fully as possible, often teachers do not allow pupils sufficient time to reflect and many staff rely entirely on ready volunteers to answer. There are missed opportunities at the conclusion of lessons to probe and build on common misconceptions held by pupils or to identify their common areas of difficulty. The quality of marking remains variable; some marking is regular and encouraging, but generally it does not provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve. Additionally, where marking has identified areas for improvement, these are not followed up with pupils to ensure they have been acted upon.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve teaching so that all pupils make at least the expected progress in English and mathematics – inadequate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is improving particularly when teaching is at least satisfactory and sharply focused to their needs. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, although their enthusiasm and motivation diminish when lessons are over-directed by teachers. There are good relationships between pupils and teaching staff, and amongst pupils. Movement generally around the school is orderly, and pupils are polite and friendly. Pupils say they feel safe at school and understand the dangers of different types of bullying. Pupils comment that this has not always been the case and attribute the recent improvements to current senior leaders. Pupils like the recently introduced reward system for good behaviour and learning which

teaching staff are using consistently. Pupils have expressed some concerns about lunchtime behaviour and how this is dealt with by some supervisory staff. Systems to improve attendance have been effective and attendance is now broadly average. Pupils understand the importance of attendance and the school's rewards and sanctions systems. A range of procedures is in place to encourage parents and carers to send their children to school regularly.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve behaviour and attendance – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and the deputy have a clear and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, their efforts to improve teaching have been hampered by staffing changes and the school's reliance on a large number of supply staff. Consequently, the rate of improvement in teaching and learning has been too slow and this is a major barrier to future rapid improvement.

The monitoring of lessons is satisfactory; it provides a secure baseline for improvement by identifying aspects of strength and areas for development. Common areas for improvement are tackled through staff training. Judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate. However, although observations focus on the characteristics of teaching, they fall short of identifying their impact on pupils' learning and progress.

The school's improvement plan has been extended and identifies the right issues with appropriate steps to address them. The deployment of both the deputy headteacher and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader into Key Stage 1 and 2 classes is having an immediate impact on improving the quality of learning; they are effective role models for good teaching. In addition, senior leaders are developing a better view of the performance of pupils who are at risk of underachieving through the introduction of pupils' progress meetings. These are held by the senior leadership team to discuss the progress of pupils from each class and to suggest strategies to improve pupils' performance. These are all positive developments, but it is too early to fully assess their impact on raising pupils' attainment, which remains below the levels expected.

The capacity of middle managers to move their teams forward is variable. This is a significant barrier to improvement in the quality of provision and attainment, as seen in the slow progress made by pupils. Senior leaders are now beginning to hold middle managers to account through a system of regular meetings and are aware there is still much more work to be done to improve the consistency of middle leadership.

Members of the governing body have established tentative management links to different areas within the school, but they are too far removed to have any real impact on driving improvement.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels – inadequate

External support

The local authority's statement of action fulfils requirements. However, the school's lack of progress in raising achievement, improving teaching, and addressing the weaknesses in leadership and management mean that its implementation to date has been inadequate. Senior staff consider the support provided by the local authority to be useful. However, it is not sufficiently targeted to support all levels of leadership effectively. Additionally, the support is not being sufficiently evaluated against the pace of development that is urgently required to raise the quality of the education provided.

Priorities for further improvement

- In order to accelerate the impact of their support, the local authority should support senior leaders with advice and expertise from human resources, and middle leaders and the governing body, individually and collectively, to give greater strategic drive to the school's work.