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21 June 2012

Mrs Caroline Owen
Headteacher
St Laurence CofE VA Primary School
Collingwood Road
Long Eaton
Nottinghamshire
NG10 1DR

Dear Mrs Owen

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Laurence CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Simon Griffiths, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19–20 June 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 February 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – satisfactory.

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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Under the guidance of the headteacher, develop the capacity of the leaders and managers to ensure that effective steps are taken to remedy weaknesses that affect pupils' achievement and increase consistency across the school by:
 - raising attainment in English and mathematics in all classes
 - securing better teaching in all areas and accelerating progress in reading and mathematics
 - establishing a curriculum that allows pupils to progress consistently well in all classes
 - applying rigorous systems for monitoring all aspects of the school's work, including the consistent implementation of the policy for the effective marking of pupils' work.

- Ensure that, by September 2012, staff use robust assessment information to set challenging targets for all pupils, which are explained to pupils and shared with all staff, parents and carers.

- Immediately devise appropriate policies for the effective management of behaviour and for pupils' punctual arrival at school, ensuring procedures are understood by pupils, parents and carers and all staff, and are consistently applied.

Special measures: monitoring of St Laurence CofE VA Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 19–20 June 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, and evaluated a sample of pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Inspection evidence shows that the levels of progress across the school remain variable from year to year and class to class, but are improving. Overall attainment for pupils at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is broadly average. The standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' workbooks indicates improvement from the time of the previous inspection. The school's data confirms this and indicates an emerging trend of improvement.

A sharp focus on the teaching of phonics throughout the school has resulted in improvements in the progress made by pupils in developing their reading skills. The well planned daily phonic sessions provide short, focused teaching for pupils and, as a result, pupils are becoming more confident in applying their increasing knowledge of letters and sounds when reading unfamiliar words.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress because of the stimulating curriculum and outstanding teaching they receive. Lesson planning is detailed and based on regular, accurate assessments. All adults working in the Early Years Foundation Stage have a sound understanding of how very young children learn.

At the time of the last inspection, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for free school meals, made inadequate progress. The school has begun to develop procedures to ensure that these pupils are provided with learning experiences more closely matched to their needs. For example, the school has introduced a number of intervention programmes in reading. In addition, improved adult support within all classrooms is ensuring that pupils access more appropriate support and good encouragement more frequently.

The quality of teaching

Lesson observations confirm that the quality of teaching and learning is improving. All staff, including teaching assistants, are responding positively to a programme of training and, as a result, no inadequate lessons were observed.

In the most successful lessons, key factors included high expectations, clear learning objectives and success criteria, activities well matched to pupils' ability levels, targeted questions to assess pupils' progress and challenge their thinking, and the promotion of pupil discussion to further develop understanding. Pupils enjoyed these well-paced lessons and accelerated progress was evident. Pupils made slower progress in lessons where activities were less demanding or similar for all pupils, and where there was an over-emphasis on consolidation of learning rather than challenge. The school recognises that there is more to do to ensure that all teachers make use of a wide range of teaching methods to support and guide pupils to enable them to make the good progress of which they are capable.

The assessment cycle has been revised, and assessment data and information is being shared regularly with teachers. However, the use of assessment to inform planning and to check pupils' understanding remains underdeveloped because work is not always well matched to the range of pupils' attainment. Teachers are continuing to receive a range of support and training on assessing pupils' progress in order to ensure accuracy and develop their understanding. Teachers recognise that they need to develop their use of first-hand assessment evidence from lessons and use this to inform future planning which meets the needs of all pupils. They are involved more closely in monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress and are being held to account for the progress of pupils through regular pupil progress dialogue meetings. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their targets and are proud to take home their 'target key rings' to share with parents and carers. The school has set challenging targets and is tracking pupils' progress regularly to ensure early identification of any concerns.

Pupils report that new marking systems and teachers' comments are helping them to understand better what they need to do to improve. However, marking is not yet consistently linked to pupils' targets or success criteria and does not always contain specific comments that ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve. Consequently, it is not having an impact on raising attainment.

The previous inspection report asked the school to improve the curriculum to better meet the needs of pupils in all classes. The school is at an early stage of responding to this area for improvement and it is too early to measure the impact on pupils' progress of actions taken.

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

- ensure that by September 2012, staff use robust assessment information to set challenging targets for all pupils, which are explained to pupils and shared with all staff, parents and carers – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupils' behaviour was a positive feature of this inspection. The school has acted swiftly to implement a new behaviour policy which is being consistently applied to reward pupils' positive behaviour and ensure that those with more challenging behaviour respond appropriately. In most lessons, pupils tried hard to complete the tasks provided and generally cooperated well when asked to work in pairs or in small groups. Occasionally, when too much time is provided for these sessions, off-task chatter develops. The pupils' behaviour generally around the school and in assembly was calm. Pupils were polite and welcoming, and keen to show inspectors their work and their improved classroom environments, indicating that they are taking more pride in their work and school. School records indicate a steady improvement in pupils' attendance and punctuality. This is a direct result of the effective strategies and good communication with parents and carers in relation to punctuality and attendance. Pupils report that they feel safe at school.

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

- immediately devise appropriate policies for the effective management of behaviour and for pupils' punctual arrival at school, ensuring procedures are understood by pupils, parents, carers and all staff, and are consistently applied – good.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The determination of senior leaders to make rapid improvements is evident. The headteacher is now supported by a new deputy headteacher, who has quickly established her role, and together they are making an effective start in tackling all improvement areas identified at the previous inspection.

Senior leaders are fully aware of the rapid progress required by pupils to overcome previous underachievement and have introduced new systems to assess and improve classroom practice. Provision is being rigorously monitored by checking the quality of planning, scrutinising pupils' workbooks, and formally observing all teaching staff. This is beginning to ensure greater consistency and improvements in classroom practice. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The school has devised a strategic plan for improvement, which includes actions to secure progress in the areas required by inspectors alongside further key priorities for the school. Progress is reviewed regularly, setting out actions, personnel responsible and appropriate timescales. Some core subject leaders are new to their

roles but indicate that they feel well supported and are developing a clear understanding of their responsibilities in securing improvements in pupils' performance. The school has introduced a number of policies and procedures which are providing a framework to support improvement, particularly in behaviour, teaching, reading, attendance and leadership. As a result, the provision is more consistent and improving, with a sharp focus on pupils' attainment and targets.

A new Chair is providing a strong lead for the re-constituted governing body. It is working more effectively and has rapidly developed a clear understanding of its role in monitoring the progress and impact of the school's work. All governors are involved in ongoing training are appreciative of the high quality support being provided by the local authority.

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

- develop the capacity of the leaders and managers to ensure that effective steps are taken to remedy weaknesses that affect pupils' achievement and increase consistency across the school – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action has been evaluated and fulfils Ofsted's requirements. All the key issues are clearly identified, with the specific support and challenge required to secure improvement. Targets in key areas are in line with those indicated in the school's improvement plan. Good support has been provided in relation to securing improvements in teaching and learning. The school confirms that the support provided is having a beneficial impact and is appropriately matched to the school's priorities. Senior leaders and local authority representatives meet regularly to review progress and to amend support where necessary.