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11 October 2012

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

Dear Ms Hough

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

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 October 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 second 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 Interim Executive Board 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 racist 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 Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9–10 October 2012

Evidence

Her majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a group of pupils, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority. In addition, the lead inspector had informal conversations with pupils in classes and around the school.

Context

There have been considerable changes to staffing since the previous monitoring inspection. Seven new teachers have been recruited to work at the school. Four of these are newly qualified teachers and three are experienced. Six teaching assistants have also joined the school. The governing body has been dissolved and an IEB has been established.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has improved, although it remains below the national average. The 2012 unvalidated national test data indicate significant improvements in mathematics results, particularly, at the higher levels. Nevertheless, attainment in Years 4 and 5 remains low. Inspection and school data indicate a slight dip in attainment at the end of Key Stage 1; attainment and progress remain below the national average for reading and writing. This is a result of weaknesses in teaching and instability in staffing in the past year. Currently, the rate of pupils' progress is increasing because of improvements to teaching. School tracking information indicates that the majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress. Although the focus on mathematics has been beneficial, school leaders are aware that mathematics and writing throughout the school remain relatively weaker subjects and have continued to prioritise the development of both subjects. For example, creative writing afternoons and smaller pupil groupings for mathematics are now features throughout the school. There is a good learning atmosphere in most classes now. Pupils enjoy discussions, respond to questions confidently and work with enthusiasm alone or in small groups. They are attentive and take a keen interest in how they are progressing. Lesson observations noted pupils in upper Key Stage 2 assessing their own work and that of their peers confidently.

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

Teaching across the school has improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of teaching that demonstrates good features is increasing and, consequently, the rate of progress made by pupils is getting faster. Consistent planning and better use of information on pupils' progress mean teachers are beginning to plan lively lessons which capture the interests and needs of most learners. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising because of improved subject knowledge and a shared understanding and application of teaching strategies. In some classes, teachers are beginning to make greater use of speaking and listening activities to enable pupils to engage actively in their learning, particularly in upper Key Stage 2. Pupils speak positively about the improvements. They say learning is more fun and that they are expected to work hard. However, senior leaders are aware that variability remains; some lessons, for example, are too teacher led and directed, encouraging too passive a response from the pupils. The pace of learning is slow because there is still too much adult direction, not enough time for pupils to learn actively and teachers do not readily adapt tasks if pupils do not respond as expected. The input of teaching assistants to pupils' learning, whether in class or group work, is beginning to make an important contribution to the progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language.

Some better questioning techniques are starting to be seen which assess, support and extend pupils' learning, but this positive feature is not yet consistent. Pupils are now set targets in literacy and numeracy and have an opportunity to respond to teachers' marking. However, these initiatives are still not embedded across the school. Senior leaders are aware that the key to improving teaching overall is to ensure consistency across the school by continuing to support individuals with the weaker aspects of their performance.

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

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

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are positive about their learning. They say that all staff are now approachable and believe the school has really improved since the beginning of the academic year; citing stability in staffing, improved behaviour and better teaching as examples. Behaviour in the lessons observed was good and this has contributed to the positive climate for learning. Systems to improve attendance have been very effective and attendance is now above average.

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

- Improve behaviour and attendance – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has been extremely effective in stabilising the turbulence in staffing. The deputy headteacher and middle managers are now a strong team. They have grown visibly in their authority over the past few months and now play a key role in ensuring that recent initiatives to improve teaching, learning and assessment are implemented and effectively evaluated. The success of the headteacher in developing the leadership skills of staff at all levels has been marked; many staff now display good skills of evaluation. Monitoring of teaching and assessment by senior leaders is realistic and is helping to improve the quality of teaching by identifying clear and appropriate points for development. The senior leadership team has worked successfully to engage staff in training and to share best practice with each other. This has greatly increased staff confidence and encouraged them to try out new ideas. High-quality support from the local authority has been managed well by school leaders. This has enabled teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and particularly how assessment is used. The school tracking document has been further developed since the previous inspection and teachers now hold regular review meetings with phase and senior leaders, where they consider the intervention required to support pupils who are underachieving.

The governing body has been disbanded and replaced with an Interim Executive Board (IEB). Members of the IEB are quickly gaining knowledge of the school and ways in which they can support the senior leadership team. However, their ability to hold the school to account for the achievement of pupils is in the very early stages.

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

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

External support

The external support provided to the school has been effective and well targeted. Local authority consultants are providing strong support to help recently qualified teachers improve their practice. This is leading to a more consistent approach to writing and mathematics. In addition, support for the school's leaders has been provided through a partner headteacher who, in conjunction with the School Improvement Partner, has been supporting the creation of self-evaluation structures across the school.