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25 January 2013

Mrs Amanda Hough
The Headteacher
St Luke's Church of England Primary School
Cookham Road
Maidenhead
SL6 7EG

Dear Mrs Hough

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

Following my visit to your school on 23 January and 24 January 2013, 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 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 the 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 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 Church of England Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 January 2013

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, three newly qualified teachers, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, a group of pupils and two representatives from the local authority. In addition, the lead inspector had informal conversations with pupils in classes and around the school.

Context

There have been some changes to staffing, since the previous monitoring inspection. Two members of staff have left the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken over the responsibilities for teaching in a class of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils and a new Chair of the Interim Executive Board has been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The rate of pupils' progress is increasing because of improvements to teaching. School tracking information indicates that the majority of pupils continue to make satisfactory progress, although in some year groups progress is now good. However, school leaders are aware that there is a significant minority of pupils who are not making the expected progress. The school has identified that pupils need more practice with quick mental calculations, and teachers have begun to plan regular sessions to work on this area, but it is too early to see the impact on standards.

Many pupils start school with low levels of literacy. Phonics (linking letters and sounds) are taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 because lessons are set at the right level for practising and learning sounds quickly. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able to tackle unfamiliar words with confidence. The work of teaching assistants in phonic sessions is making an important contribution throughout the school.

In lessons, pupils are mostly attentive and take a keen interest in how they are progressing. Pupils in a Years 5 and 6 class were observed applying themselves well to a problem-solving activity that was suitably matched to their prior attainment.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The most effective teaching takes place in calm and well-managed classrooms where pupils respond quickly to their teachers' high expectations for work and behaviour. In these lessons, pupils learn productively from each other when they either share their ideas in discussion or work together to solve problems. This is because teachers' planning shows that teachers provide different levels of work for pupils and tasks are practical and exciting. For example, in a Years 5 and 6 class, pupils were clear about the level they were trying to achieve and the skills they needed. The practical task was well organised; the pupils had all the resources to work independently and they were given effective incentives to question and support each other. In another Years 1 and 2 lesson, energetic presentation, good relationships, and clear demonstrations by the teacher of what the pupils should do encouraged high levels of participation and enjoyment in fast-paced learning.

In some lessons the presentation does not always capture or sustain pupils' interest because the challenge is not clear and the content has not been made relevant or practical. The range of activities does not involve pupils actively enough in their learning. Pupils are given too few practical and well-structured opportunities to work independently. The less able pupils are sometimes given work that is too hard and they struggle to complete it even with help.

Marking of books has been a focus for the school and is becoming more effective in reinforcing what pupils have learnt. In the best examples, pupils reflect on their own successes and have some opportunities to respond to what the adults have written. However, this is still not consistent across the school and too many comments recognise what the pupil has learnt but do not give a clear indication of what they need to do next.

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

The atmosphere around the school continues to be calm and orderly. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave and manage behaviour consistently well. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and pupils say they are confident in approaching their teachers or other staff if they have a problem. Attendance continues to improve and is in line with the national average and pupils arrive at school on time.

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 drive, ambition and determination of the headteacher continue to be central in securing a range of positive changes. The headteacher has introduced effective professional development strategies that have tackled inadequate teaching and are beginning to tackle teaching that, while broadly satisfactory, requires improvement. Lesson observations completed by senior leaders provide teachers with helpful information about successful aspects of their lessons, as well as about how lessons can be improved.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the leadership team has successfully established a regular system for tracking and evaluating pupils' progress and attainment over time. The school's participation in initiatives to check the accuracy of assessments means that assessments are now secure and are beginning to make a positive contribution to improving pupils' achievement. These initiatives include close links with four neighbouring schools to develop writing and consistency in assessment, combined with improvements in teachers' subject knowledge. Pupils' achievement against their targets is regularly reviewed by the senior leaders and adjustments are made where the level of challenge is seen to be insufficient on an individual pupil basis.

There are strong systems in the school to support newly qualified teachers. Mentoring and support from senior leaders encourage teachers to develop skills and increase the impact they have in the classroom. Staff morale is high. Staff are very supportive of the headteacher and senior leaders and many commented on the positive impact she has had this term. They say they feel valued and listened to and appreciate the fact that the school is running smoothly.

The interim executive board is now led by an experienced and knowledgeable Chair. She is determined to ensure that the school benefits from the support of the local authority in, for example, dealing more quickly with issues of long-term staff absence or underperformance. Members of the interim executive board are supportive but they do not play a strong enough part in shaping and driving improvement.

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 local authority has provided extensive support to this school. However, the partnership between the school and local authority and the interim executive board has not been productive. It has not, for example, resolved the on-going problems with teacher recruitment and long-term staff absence, which are limiting the impact of work to improve outcomes and provision for all pupils. The challenge for the local authority is now to check systematically the impact of its work in the school, and to hold the school rigorously to account for the implementation of its own improvement plan.