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1 February 2013

Mrs Heather Wareing
Associate Headteacher
Carleton St Hilda's Church of England Primary School
Bispham Road
Carleton
Lancashire
FY6 7PE

Dear Mrs Wareing

Special measures monitoring inspection of Carleton St Hilda's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 and 31 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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, the Diocese and the Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the impact of leaders' actions on improving the quality of education provided, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - reviewing the delegation of senior and middle leaders' roles and responsibilities
 - increasing the rigour of leaders' monitoring and evaluation procedures
 - ensuring the governing body provides sufficient challenge to school leaders
 - providing better and more accurate reporting from senior leaders and the local authority to the governing body
 - raising the bar for the setting of targets for pupils' attainment to ensure that all groups of pupils are expected to make good progress
 - reviewing the school's policy to secure more effective teaching and learning
 - providing staff training in leadership skills.

- Eradicate all inadequate teaching and improve satisfactory teaching to good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - improving the quality of teachers' planning to identify the skills and knowledge to be learned by pupils
 - improving the use of assessment information to ensure lesson plans take full account of pupils' starting points
 - ensuring whole school consistency in implementing the school's approach to teaching
 - providing staff training that is matched to the improvements needed in the quality of teaching
 - ensuring teaching is always brisk and that regular checks are made on pupils' progress in lessons
 - improving the marking of pupils' work so that feedback informs pupils about how to improve.

- Improve pupils' academic outcomes and achievement, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - ensuring greater challenge in lessons especially for higher-attaining pupils
 - improving the teaching and marking of writing
 - ensuring a greater consistency of good quality teaching throughout the school
 - increasing expectations of the progress made by girls.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 30 and 31 January 2013

The inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body, the associate headteacher, associate deputy headteacher, associate assistant headteacher, other key leaders and a representative from the local authority. The inspector held discussions with all teachers and a group of pupils, observed teaching in all classes, scrutinised a sample of pupils' writing and took account of the school's pupil progress tracking.

Context

There have been several changes to leadership and teaching staff since the last monitoring inspection. The headteacher left the school at the beginning of December 2012. The associate headteacher, who had been supporting developments in leadership, led the school until 24 January 2013. A full-time associate headteacher started on 22 January 2013 and has been secured to lead the school until a substantive headteacher is appointed. An associate deputy headteacher has been seconded to the school until August 2013 and the associate assistant headteacher's secondment has been extended.

Two teachers have left the school. There is a teacher on a short term contract in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the associate assistant headteacher is covering the other vacancy. Governors have advertised a leadership post for the Early Years Foundation Stage and are planning to recruit to this post by the beginning of the summer term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

This monitoring inspection focused on pupils' progress in lessons and the progress they have made since the start of this academic year. The pace of learning in lessons has quickened. Pupils are making better progress because more activities are now set at the right level to extend their skills. Teachers are taking care to plan work that builds on pupils' prior knowledge and engages their interest. Pupils enjoy the increased opportunities they have to work independently, especially when solving problems and thinking creatively.

Pupils' writing in Years 2, 3 and 6 was scrutinised in detail. Pupils have more opportunities to write extended pieces for different purposes and audiences. Their writing has improved well since the start of the year and some pupils have made rapid progress, particularly in Year 6. The school's tracking of pupils' progress shows a similar picture in reading and mathematics. However, there is still some variability across the whole school. This is because teaching has not been good enough in the past and learning has been disrupted by absence and temporary arrangements in some classes. These issues are being resolved through suitable long-term cover arrangements until new staff are appointed.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection. Inadequate teaching has been tackled through performance management and further training. The interim associate headteacher has driven through improvements to planning and assessment. Teachers have enthusiastically engaged in further professional development and are keen to share expertise.

Lessons are better planned to give pupils more time to work independently and they are now more productive. The most effective lessons provide demanding activities that engage pupils in solving problems, thinking creatively and completing extended pieces of writing. However, this is not yet consistent across the whole school. The tasks set for pupils are sometimes too easy and quickly completed. In the Reception class, there are missed opportunities to develop children's knowledge and skills in adult-led sessions. However, the classroom is better organised with a range of stimulating activities that children can access independently.

Teachers have a greater understanding of pupils' levels of attainment and are monitoring their progress more closely. Challenging targets have been set for each pupil and additional support is put in place if pupils are not making expected progress. A small group of pupils in Year 6 are receiving additional support from the associate deputy headteacher, which is helping them to catch up. There is a consistent approach to marking with all teachers identifying how work could be improved. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to act on the teachers' comments and some basic errors, for example in the use of punctuation, persist.

The teaching of reading and writing, has improved. Daily reading and small-group teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) are giving pupils opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. Pupils are good at spelling and have a wide vocabulary. Their punctuation skills and handwriting are weaker. Further professional development is planned to ensure that teachers set group reading and phonics activities at just the right level. It would benefit staff to review how grammar, punctuation and handwriting are taught, in order to ensure a methodical approach.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' motivation has increased as activities are better matched to their interests and abilities. Pupils are showing more concentration during lessons and are more able to work independently. They say they feel safe and show consideration for each other. Levels of attendance remain above average. Pupils say they are keen to take on more responsibility. Pupils in Year 6, for example, would welcome the

reinstatement of the pupil council and opportunities to contribute to the running of their school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim associate headteacher provided stability and expertise when the headteacher left, ensuring that staff continued to develop their teaching and leadership skills. The new senior leadership team is experienced and eager to improve teaching. Steps have already been taken to recruit an experienced Early Years Foundation Stage leader. Staff morale and motivation have improved. Staff have welcomed opportunities to share ideas, contribute to planning and take responsibility.

Action plans to improve literacy, mathematics, assessment and provision for able, gifted and talented pupils are now securely in place and clearly set out leadership responsibilities. The monitoring and evaluation schedule sets out the roles all leaders have in checking improvement in their area of responsibility. Staff are working as a team to ensure consistent approaches to teaching and continuity in pupils' learning.

Governors are tackling inadequacies and acting quickly to recruit new staff. They have a good overview of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement. The Standards and Effectiveness Committee is monitoring progress with school improvement plans. Training has helped governors to ask the right questions to challenge and support leaders. Their more direct involvement in monitoring quality through discussion with children and teachers is identified as the next step.

External support

The local authority has provided good support to the school. It acted swiftly to secure continuity and support for the school when the headteacher left. A leadership team has been established for the next two terms to ensure improvement continues. The local authority has continued to provide training for staff to support school improvement plans.