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15 February 2013

Mrs J Sinclair
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Old Road
Crayford
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Kent
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Dear Mrs Sinclair

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 February 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 May 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. Although the school is currently fully staffed, newly qualified teachers may be appointed if necessary.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise achievement so that all pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1, make at least the progress expected in English and mathematics by December 2013 by:
 - improving the daily phonics sessions so pupils rapidly develop skills of listening carefully to sounds in a word to enable them to read and spell accurately and independently
 - reviewing the personal targets of pupils with special educational needs frequently enough so they all make better progress
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise practical mathematics activities linked to everyday life.

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially at Key Stage 1, so that much is good or better by December 2013 and all pupils make more rapid gains in learning by:
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan work that is accurately matched to pupils' needs and abilities
 - giving more time for pupils to undertake independent work
 - checking in lessons that all pupils understand the work and promptly address any misunderstandings enhancing teachers' skills in managing behaviour
 - ensuring that teachers' marking is used more consistently to encourage all pupils to follow up suggestions for improvement.

- Ensure all leaders and managers, including the governing body, are effective in improving the school by:
 - rigorously monitoring the quality of learning in lessons
 - ensuring agreed strategies to improve learning are effective in every class.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 February 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other members, the headteacher, subject leaders, the school council, a representative from the local authority and a local headteacher who is working with the school. Teaching was observed in all seven classes. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.

Context

No new teachers have been appointed and there have been no other significant changes since the last monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

As the quality of teaching continues to improve pupils are making more progress in lessons. While the rate of progress is variable across classes and subjects, there is nonetheless a picture of clear and sustained improvement. Children in the Reception class make good progress. They are making better progress in linking letters to the sounds they make because the quality of teaching is improving. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making much better progress than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Year 1 are doing particularly well in improving their early reading skills, while in Year 2 pupils are doing better in mathematics. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are also making more progress. Pupils are rapidly improving their reading, writing and mathematics. The school has been particularly successful in improving the performance of specific groups of pupils who may have been at risk of underachievement. Pupils who are supported through the pupil premium receive well-thought-out support tailored to meet their particular needs. As a result, they are making good progress and the attainment gap with other pupils is closing. However, even within focus groups, there is variation in the rates of progress pupils make, with some making rapid progress and some making very little. Pupils make the best progress when expectations are high and all are expected to join in, answer questions and work together. Improvements in writing and spelling noted at the time of the last inspection have been built on. Pupils in Year 1 used the strategies taught during the lesson to help them spell difficult words. While most managed to spell 'explore' correctly, even those who struggled managed phonetically plausible attempts.

The school is making good use of its new system for tracking pupils' progress. The progress of pupils is discussed by teachers and senior staff in pupils' progress meetings each half term. These meetings are used to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving and to discuss strategies to accelerate their progress. In subsequent review meetings, pupils' progress is discussed. Where progress is not

fast enough, revisions to support are agreed. Where progress is rapid, pupils cease to be a focus for additional support and others become the focus so that all will make accelerated progress over time.

The quality of teaching

Improvements identified in the last monitoring report have been consolidated and built on. No teaching is inadequate, more is good and some is outstanding. The teaching of phonics in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2 is improving, with teachers demonstrating good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned so that learning is sequential and one activity builds on the next. While pupils are generally eager learners, sometimes expectations are not sufficiently high or consistent. Teachers do not always insist that all pupils join in so that some miss out on important parts of the lesson. Where teaching is best, teachers use a range of strategies to make sure all of the pupils work hard. They ask lots of questions, encourage pupils to work collaboratively as well as independently, and are clear about the high standards they expect.

The weekly Big Maths sessions, where pupils work in mixed-age ability groups on a range of practical and problem-solving activities, are proving hugely popular. Pupils say 'it's fun' and 'tests your brain'. They also speak highly of the targeted computer-based program they can work on at home or after school on Thursday. They say it helps to improve their understanding of mathematics. All pupils spoken to know their National Curriculum targets and what they need to do to get there. The quality of marking has improved. It often makes reference to how successful pupils have been in achieving the learning objective but this is not consistent across all classes. While marking is clear about telling pupils how well they have done, it is often less clear about what they need to do to improve particular aspects of their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

This is a caring and friendly school. Pupils say that everyone gets along well together and that the rare problems which occur are resolved through recourse to the prayer room for a period of quiet reflection. They say that the school's ethos of tolerance and forgiveness is central to the good relationships which are clearly evident. In lessons, pupils almost always display positive attitudes to learning, although some younger pupils can be reluctant to join in with whole-class or group activities and miss out on valuable learning. Pupils are confident and polite. They are proud of their school and say they would recommend it to others. Pupils know about road safety, how to keep themselves safe online and the potential dangers of social networking sites.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher continues to provide ambitious and effective leadership. She knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and is well placed to oversee its continuing improvement. Information on pupils' progress is now being used much more effectively to identify underachievement and hold teachers to account for how well pupils are doing. It has a clearer link to the targets set for staff as part of the appraisal of performance. Improvement planning is detailed but lacks sufficient focus on the intended outcomes of actions on pupils' achievement. Both the school and subject action plans are too vague about the improvements in pupils' progress and attainment which are expected to result from the school's actions. In addition, timelines are unclear and improvement planning does not say exactly when progress will be assessed.

Members of the governing body have further refined their role. They carefully analyse reports on the school's progress and adapt their actions accordingly. They are proving very effective in holding the school to account for the impact of its actions, such as when interviewing staff about the effectiveness of training and professional development. They have been active in monitoring the progress of groups of pupils and have quickly got to grips with the intricacies of the school's tracking system. They would be better placed to hold the school to account if school improvement planning was more explicit about how the school's actions will raise attainment and when improvements will be measured.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide effective and well-targeted support for governors and teachers. Teachers have valued support and advice in the teaching of phonics, improving writing across the school and ensuring pupils have positive attitudes to learning. The school has also valued the support from local Catholic schools which have provided additional support for improving leadership and management and the quality of teaching.