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Miss Caroline Owen
Headteacher
St Laurence CofE VA Primary School
Collingwood Road
Long Eaton
Nottinghamshire
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Dear Miss Owen

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Laurence CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27–28 February 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 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.

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 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 third monitoring inspection on 27–28 February 2013

Evidence

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

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing, particularly at senior management level. The deputy headteacher is currently on sickness absence and has resigned her post with effect from 30 April 2013. The literacy subject leader resigned her leadership responsibilities immediately following the previous monitoring visit and has now resigned her teaching post with effect from 15 March 2013. Another teacher also resigned his leadership responsibilities immediately following the previous monitoring visit and is currently on long-term sickness absence. One member of staff has recently returned from long-term sickness absence on a phased return. The headteacher has acted swiftly to secure a number of temporary appointments to cover these absences and imminent resignations. These include the temporary appointment of two experienced senior teachers, one on a secondment; both are undertaking the roles of assistant headteachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

A close scrutiny and comparison of the Key Stage 2 results for Year 6 in 2012 with the national results indicate that this group of pupils' attainment was below average in mathematics and broadly average in English. This represents an improvement on the results achieved in 2011. However, the progress made by the outgoing Year 6 pupils between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics was below the national median. The latest school data shows a mixed picture for pupils' attainment and rates of progress because many pupils still have gaps in their learning from previous slower learning.

A greater proportion of pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2 are making the progress they should, but few are making better than expected progress. Progress across the school is stronger in reading as a result of the reading recovery programme. It is weakest in mathematics. However, progress in some lessons is accelerating which is linked directly to better teaching, with pupils engaging more enthusiastically and developing positive attitudes to learning. Progress for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and pupils who receive free school meals is similar to

their peers. Senior leaders recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that progress is good, but the focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning shows a resolute determination in the school's efforts to make up lost ground.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous monitoring visit and is enabling pupils in some classes to make accelerated progress and to catch up on previous gaps in their learning. This is because some teachers have been open and willing to change their practice as a result of professional development opportunities, as well as the appointment of new, temporary staff. More than half of the lessons observed during the monitoring visit were good or better. However, some teaching is still inadequate.

In the most successful lessons, key factors included high expectations, activities well matched to pupils' abilities, the promotion of pupil discussion to develop understanding, and targeted questions to assess pupils' progress and challenge their thinking. In addition, in two outstanding lessons observed during the inspection, teaching assistants significantly enhanced the learning by leading small groups effectively and demonstrating good subject knowledge. As a result, pupils made accelerated progress and enjoyed these lessons greatly. In those lessons that required improvement or were inadequate, the pace of learning was not sufficiently brisk and pupils failed to make good progress because the independent activities did not provide them with the right level of challenge to extend their learning further. The inspection evidence confirms the school's view that there is now a greater proportion of good teaching. However, the school recognises that swift action must be taken to eradicate inadequate teaching and to ensure that teaching is consistently good or better in all classes.

The school's tracking system provides each teacher with detailed information on how individual pupils are progressing, including those who are behind where they should be. Most teachers demonstrate confidence in using this assessment information to ensure that they plan tasks that are better matched to pupils' abilities and are suitably challenging. Challenging targets and regular pupil progress meetings emphasise teachers' accountability for raising pupils' achievement.

Marking is good. All teachers understand and consistently apply the requirements of the revised policy. Pupils are being provided with clear and more detailed academic guidance. Pupils indicate that the new marking system and teachers' comments help them to understand what they need to do to improve further. Increasingly, there are growing opportunities for pupils to respond to marking and learn from their mistakes, as well as to evaluate their own and other pupils' work.

The school has recently introduced a new individual pupil target-tracking sheet. This new, child-friendly tracker provides pupils with good opportunities to discuss and agree targets with their teachers. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 have quickly become

familiar with using this and know what their targets are and what they need to do to meet them. The school recognises that this needs to be more fully embedded across the school, particularly in Key Stage 1.

In some classes, teachers link the learning across subjects to capture pupils' interest and give them opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects. However, in a mixed Year 3 and Year 4 topic lesson observed during the inspection, the poor quality and limited amount of pupils' work confirmed that there are missed opportunities to spark pupils' interest and for them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

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

- ensure that 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

Behaviour around school and in lessons is typically good. Teachers use the behaviour management system very effectively to promote high standards of behaviour. Pupils are keen to support each other and are proud of their school. Their good behaviour makes a positive contribution to their improved progress. Pupils continue to say that they feel safe in school and enjoy good friendships, with no fear of intimidating behaviour.

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

- 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 headteacher has maintained a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning despite significant turbulence in staffing since the previous monitoring visit. Working closely with the local authority, she has ensured that support has been closely matched to the needs of individual teachers and this has contributed to improving the quality of some teaching and learning.

The two temporary assistant headteachers are committed to supporting the headteacher and are beginning to gain an understanding of what needs to be done. They are aware of the significance of the role they need to play in setting high expectations, demonstrating that they have the necessary skills to drive school improvement through delivering consistently good or better lessons, and raising

attainment. However, it is too early to judge the impact of their new roles and any actions taken to date. The headteacher and governors are aware of the urgent need to secure high-quality senior leadership on a permanent basis.

The established numeracy subject leader has worked hard to develop her role since the previous monitoring visit. She is taking greater responsibility for improving pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics through being involved in a range of monitoring activities. The literacy subject leader role is currently being shared by the two assistant headteachers. To date, they have not had sufficient time to devise a literacy subject action plan or undertake a range of monitoring activities. As a result, the role of subject leaders is limited at the present time and is not fully contributing to the school's improvement.

The governing body has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities and has a sharp focus on pupils' achievement. Discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body confirms that it is challenging the information presented to it by the school in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, the school's effectiveness in tackling areas for improvement is strengthening. Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and continue to meet latest requirements.

Progress since the last monitoring 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 has provided strong support to the school in securing a number of crucial, temporary appointments at senior management level during an extremely turbulent time. The local authority adviser has a good overview of the school's work and effectively monitors the progress and the level of support required. Productive partnership arrangements with other local schools have successfully supported some improvements in teaching and learning.

Priorities for further improvement

Priorities remain those identified at the time of the last inspection.