

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 6799163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com

19 June 2013

Sally Johnson
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Poynton Road Campus / Dawsons Rough Campus
Shawbury
Shrewsbury
SY4 4JR

Dear Mrs Johnson

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 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 recent section 5 inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body and the representative of the local authority who met with me and the members of the governing body and the other local authority officer who attended the feedback meeting.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I spoke by telephone to the National Leader of Education who is supporting you in your drive for improvement. I briefly visited classrooms on both of the school's sites. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan and looked at a range of other documents.

Context

Since the school's inspection in March, three teachers and two teaching assistants have taken sick leave. One of the deputy headteachers has relinquished the responsibilities of the post, which means that the school now has only one deputy headteacher. Building works on the Poynton Road site are continuing. As part of the process of moving to one site, it has been necessary to reorganise the staffing structure. As a result, at the end of this term, one teacher, two teaching assistants and one member of the administrative staff will leave. It is anticipated that the new building will be ready by the start of the autumn term. Pupils will be taught in single-age classes, apart from in Years 4 and 5 where numbers do not allow this.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

It was clear from my discussions with you, the local authority's representative, the Chair of the Governing Body and the National Leader of Education who is supporting St Mary's that there is a strong ambition for the school to move forward and be removed from special measures as soon as possible. That is not to say that your views of the school's current position and the barriers that need to be overcome are unrealistic. On the contrary; all parties clearly understand the areas of weakness that need to be tackled and have already taken steps to begin to do this.

Your plan of action covers in detail the areas that the inspection team identified as needing improvement. Actions are clearly specified and tied to precise timings. The plan includes clear targets and interim measures. The targets are suitably challenging; for example, that all teaching will be good by the end of this calendar year, and reflect the urgency noted above. Arrangements for checking the impact of action taken are explicit. Some action, including visits by teachers to observe teaching in another school, has already begun. Staff meetings and training have also focused on the features of good and outstanding teaching. A set of 'non-negotiables' for classroom practice has been agreed.

The local authority's statement of action sets out how its officers will work with you to bring about the required improvements. The support from the National Leader of Education has been brokered and advisers for English, mathematics and assessment, among others, are scheduled to work with you and your staff. The support is measured and appropriate.

You are giving a strong steer to the school's efforts. Leadership at other levels is too variable in quality, and the leadership of English for next term has yet to be confirmed. This means that you are doing some of the work that other staff should be doing. Subject leaders and others with responsibilities in the school have drawn

up individual action plans to supplement the overall action plan and to guide their work. The plans that have been drafted so far reflect the variability in the quality of leadership. The plan for mathematics, for example, is specific and has clear links to the overall action plan. Others, such as for assessment and for improving the progress of pupils supported by pupil premium funding, are more of a list of things to be done rather than a staged, strategic approach towards a specific outcome. Success criteria are lacking or are not clear enough. Work is needed to strengthen these individual plans and ensure that they dovetail more closely with the overall action plan.

Your observations of teaching and learning and other activities such as the scrutiny of pupils' books and 'learning walks' carried out by governors have given you a clear picture of where teaching requires improvement. You have given staff the unequivocal message that only good teaching is good enough and that you will support them in striving for this. You are also determined that this will happen as soon as possible and will instigate formal procedures should teachers not show the capability of rising to what is expected of them.

The current assessments of pupils' attainment and progress do not indicate widespread underachievement. Variability from year group to year group, from subject to subject and between different groups of pupils is obvious. However, the overall picture shows that pupils generally do not have a good deal of ground to make up.

The main barriers to rapid improvement are the weaknesses in leadership at different levels and too much teaching that requires improvement. However, you are clearly determined to deal swiftly with these matters and have the support of the governing body, the local authority and the National Leader of Education in doing so. The climate in the school is positive, the need for change has been accepted and expectations have been raised. The start that has been made is encouraging. Taking all of this into account, you should agree a target date for the removal of special measures that is well within the two-year timescale.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire, the Diocese of Lichfield and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector