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26 June 2013

Mrs Anne Bleasdale
Associate Headteacher
St Catherine's RC Primary School
Moss Lane
Leyland
Lancashire
PR 25 4SJ

Dear Mrs Bleasdale

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Catherine's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 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 previous monitoring visit. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of Governing Body, staff and pupils who met with me.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress across subjects, especially boys and the more able pupils, by:
 - raising expectations of pupils' achievement and providing further challenge and aspiration for pupils to reach the highest levels of work
 - matching work more closely to the interests and abilities of all pupils
 - providing specific training to enable teachers to set challenging targets and accelerate pupils' progress
 - deploying support assistants more effectively.
- Raise attainment and improve pupils' progress by:
 - setting challenging targets that accurately reflect pupils' starting points in Year 1 and reviewing these each half term
 - ensuring that the curriculum is broad, balanced and provides an in-depth, continuous coverage of the National Curriculum for Years 1 to 6
 - focusing sharply on pupils' acquisition of knowledge, especially in problem solving and investigational work in mathematics
 - increasing pupils' enjoyment of learning by making lessons interesting and matching work to their abilities.
- Urgently improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring school leaders provide a clear sense of direction that supports and guides staff in making improvements
 - establishing clear and effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in order to focus on the areas most in need of improvement
 - setting clear, challenging and measurable targets for the management and improvement of teachers' performance
 - strictly implementing and reviewing improvement plans that are closely linked to measurable outcomes for pupils.
- Improve governance by:
 - ensuring the governing body fulfils its responsibilities in relation to staff performance management
 - ensuring that available funds for pupils eligible for pupil premium are allocated to support their achievement.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 June 2013

Evidence

I observed the school's work; including watching nine teachers teach nine full lessons and two shorter sessions. I scrutinised documents and met with you, the associate deputy headteacher, the associate assistant headteachers, teachers, pupils, Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and three new governors have joined the governing body. Two teachers remain on long-term sickness absence; one has decided to take retirement in July. On the days of the inspection, another teacher was absent. The associate headteacher, the associate deputy headteacher and the two associate assistant headteachers will leave the school in July. The governors have appointed an experienced headteacher on a two-year secondment from September 2013 and a permanent deputy headteacher has been recruited and will take up that role in September. Governors have appointed two temporary teachers: one for 12 months and one for a term. Both these teachers will join the school in September. Governors are advertising for a senior teacher to take up appointment in January 2014.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Despite an improvement in the quality of teaching, achievement in reading, writing and mathematics remains uneven across the school. This is because pupils are still trying to make up gaps in previous learning. The school's current information on Year 6 pupils' achievement in the three subjects shows that this group of pupils has made accelerated progress over the last two terms. However, because of wide gaps in pupils' prior learning, attainment in reading and mathematics is average and slightly lower in writing. Pupils in this class are proud of the progress they have made in their work and feel confident about the move to their new schools; as one pupil said, 'My grades have shot up.'

After my last visit, you and senior leaders, with the support of the local authority and staff from other schools, reviewed all pupils' achievement to provide a secure baseline from which to measure progress. Although over a short time, it shows that pupils are making progress in most classes. Progress is stronger in reading, especially in Years 4 to 6, with an uplift in attainment in several classes. Pupils consider they are making more progress in their lessons as they enjoy the activities and feel they receive work which is better matched to their ability. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, from the start of the lesson each group was given exactly the right level of work: one group, who work faster, worked through

problem-solving activities independently; one group was supported by the teaching assistant; and the teacher modelled the new learning to the remaining group. As such, all groups were able to learn well from the start of the lesson.

Pupils are more comfortable with their targets for reading, writing and mathematics and see the link between these, their work and the marking they receive. Older pupils have these targets readily available in their books to refer to when working and younger pupils have the targets written on a card which stands on their desks. A sample of pupils' workbooks shows that teachers are following the guidance on marking using the 'pink' and 'green' approach. Pupils say that teachers use marking to tell them how well they have done and to move them onto the next step in learning; for example, showing an example of a calculation method or asking pupils to extend a sentence with an adverb. However, there are still opportunities for this to become more common practice in all classes so that the marking links more plainly with the target or what the pupils have learned in the lesson.

Pupils are enjoying the newly planned topic work, which links subjects together. Pupils described enthusiastically about how the links make them think harder and allow them to 'do writing and maths' in lots of subjects. Pupils are experiencing more visits and visitors; for example, as part of the multi-faith week Year 4 and Year 6 visited the Buddhist temple. Similarly, there are now more activities after the end of the school day for pupils to enjoy. Problem-solving activities are becoming more common in lessons and resources are organised so that pupils have the equipment they need. More use of resources in mathematics to help pupils' conceptual understanding would benefit all pupils. While this new medium-term subject overview is showing some success, as it includes skills and knowledge pupils are expected to learn and know, it is early days to check the effectiveness on pupils' achievement and there is still a need to have a long-term process in place.

The quality of teaching

Since my last visit the quality of teaching has become stronger, leading to pupils making better progress in lessons. Training from local authority consultants on, for example, questioning techniques, learning styles and monitoring, assessment and target-setting; together with coaching and training sessions from leadership are all paying dividends as teachers' practice becomes more confident and precise. Better practice is evidenced in:

- well structured lessons with different activities for the different abilities in the class
- activities which engage and capture pupils' interest from the start of a lesson
- the use of information and communication technology as a learning tool for pupils
- a focus on the correct use of mathematical vocabulary

- the use of English skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing across subjects
- teaching assistants supporting pupils' learning from the very start of lessons
- adults moving around the room to move pupils on in their learning or to give advice to a pupil who is struggling.

While much of the above was seen in several lessons there is still an opportunity for teachers to hone these skills further to accelerate pupils' progress. Similarly, there is scope for teachers to quicken the pace of some parts of lessons and use pupils' 'wrong answers' to generate discussion and extend learning for all pupils more often. Likewise, it would be useful to review the use of photocopied worksheets as in one class too much time was spent on the cutting and sticking of worksheets rather than using the sheets as a resource to extend writing.

Teaching assistants are contributing effectively to the learning of pupils. In all classes, teaching assistants were guiding and supporting pupils from the start of the lesson either in small groups or individually. Through preparation prior to the lesson, teaching assistants knew what pupils were expected to learn and used the newly introduced 'communication form' to record the response of the pupils. In this way vital information about the progress of pupils is communicated to teachers so that future learning can be pitched just right.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

As at my last visit, a positive learning atmosphere is evident throughout the school. A new behaviour policy has been introduced, 'traffic lights', and pupils in all classes know what will happen if there are instances of misbehaviour. Pupils said that they are happy about the process as it is fair. They like the fact that they start each day on 'green' and that if there are any slips into 'amber' they can redeem themselves and move back to green. Pupils spoken to wanted to stay out of red. Observations showed that this process is being consistently used by teachers so pupils know what is expected. Pupils have composed reminders of how to behave and these are tastefully displayed as posters around the school in areas chosen by the pupils. Pupils feel that behaviour has improved 'a lot' and this was reflected in my observations in classes and around the school. Good quality displays reflect the achievements of pupils in different subjects, effort and behaviour and the achievement assembly celebrates these successes. Pupils feel safe in school and feel everyone gets on, working and playing well together. They are polite and were very happy to tell me about the changes in the school including the library, of which they are very proud.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim leadership team continues to set direction for the improvement of the school. They have successfully set the foundations on which the school can build improvement. Through well planned professional training and coaching they have supported staff to improve classroom practice. They have created a collaborative approach to improvement, developing teachers' self-evaluation skills and stimulating professional dialogue so that teachers and teaching assistants know what is expected of them and strive to achieve it. For example, the development of the new curriculum was modelled by the deputy headteacher and staff worked together to produce a plan for this half term for their class. After review, teachers have used this model to set the topic for the autumn term. Vital systems and procedures have become more part and parcel of daily school life and leadership use these tools to check on the progress of actions for improvement regularly.

Through thorough discussion with staff and external support, you and your leadership team now have a secure baseline from which to measure pupils' progress. Teachers now know exactly what levels pupils are working at and the progress they should be making. Pupils' progress is measured each half term in reading, writing and mathematics and this information is evaluated by senior leaders. Early indications show that pupils are making progress from this secure starting point.

With the imminent departure of the phase leaders, other teachers have been appointed to lead English and mathematics. They are working together to ensure no time is lost in the developments in these subjects. For example, new leaders are involved in book scrutinies and identifying areas for future improvement.

The Chair of the Standards and Effectiveness Committee has been appointed as Chair of the Governing Body and three vacancies have been filled leading to a full governing body. New governors have received a thorough introduction to their role from the Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher. Many governors have attended training in data analysis, finance, and at the local authority governor training day. Governors are working through their action plan, are reviewing their skills and have re-organised committees to more rigorously check the progress of the school.

Even though governors planned interviews to appoint a new headteacher, they were unable to do so. With the support of the Diocese and local authority they have secured the secondment of an experienced headteacher for a period of two years. A new, permanent deputy headteacher has been appointed. The new leadership team has already been working with the interim leadership to ensure a smooth change over for September. However, it is vital that the improvement of the school is not halted by this situation. Notwithstanding the improvement in leadership and management procedures, governance, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching,

there remains work to be done to hasten pupils' progress so they can attain higher levels of attainment and do as well as they are able.

External support

The local authority has continued to give effective support to the school through regular well pitched training for all and individual teachers. Work with teaching assistants has already led to improvements in their contribution to pupils' learning. Challenge and support is provided through the local authority officer's attendance at the Standards and Effectiveness Committee. With the change in leadership from September, this officer is planning more regular visits to the school to ensure constancy.

Recommendation:

- ensure the change in leadership builds on the firm foundation set to accelerate improvements.