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14 July 2013

Miss Samantha Price
St Peter's CofE (C) Primary School
Reservoir Road
Hednesford
Cannock
WS12 1BE

Dear Miss Price

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Peter's CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit with Nigel Boyd, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Gordon Ewing, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 July 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.

The inspection was the third 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.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 of Lichfield and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and accelerate the progress made by pupils in order to raise their attainment by:
 - ensuring that there is a systematic approach to teaching skills in writing and mathematics, and providing opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills across the curriculum
 - sharing current good and outstanding practice regarding the expectations of pupils, and the pace at which they should progress
 - ensuring that teachers' marking provides pupils with consistently good guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, and that pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' advice.
- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders in order to secure rapid improvement by:
 - regularly and rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and using this information to provide a coherent programme of professional development for all staff
 - regularly checking the progress made by all pupils in order to set challenging targets and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - sharpening the skills of leaders in monitoring and evaluating the school's provision so that they are able to support the headteacher effectively with school improvement.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 July 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, observed every teacher and scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Telephone discussions were held with representatives from the local authority.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the previous monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement remains variable but is improving rapidly. In particular, the proportion of pupils making good progress or who exceed national expectations at the end of Year 6 is high. Over 80% of all pupils in Year 6 reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. This is a significant improvement on

previous years, especially in mathematics, which saw a rise of over 10%. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels also improved. In reading, for example, over 40% reached Level 5, with over a third reaching this level in mathematics. A small number also reached the highest level possible in mathematics for the first time in the school's history.

Despite this improved picture, some areas for concern remain. The number of pupils reaching the required standards at the end of Year 2 fell in 2013, although this is in line with national levels. Pupils with additional needs or disabilities are making similar progress to their peers in reading, writing and mathematics in most, but not all, year groups. However, this is not the case in mathematics, where the progress of pupils with additional needs is often below expectation. Boys make similar progress to girls in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils eligible for the pupil premium attain slightly below their peers in most year groups. However, when their starting points are taken into account, their progress is at least as good as their peers. According to data provided by the school, the gap in performance at the end of Year 6 is equivalent to less than 1 term (or 4 months) in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils now spend more time writing at length or applying core skills in mathematics. This hard work is paying off and pupils now use a wider range of vocabulary whilst explaining their work, and are more confident when calculating to solve problems in mathematics. Similarly, both spelling and sentence construction are much improved, although less so for pupils with additional learning needs.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving and is now approaching good, with some examples of outstanding practice emerging. No inadequate teaching was observed on this visit. Teachers and support assistants consistently apply school policies, leading to greater equality where all pupils now get consistent experiences.

There are some emerging strengths evident in all classes. These include very positive relationships with pupils, higher expectation throughout and some imaginative and frequent use of paired working. This is especially effective in the use of regular but precise 'talk time' in which pupils are asked to discuss for one minute how to solve a problem. They respect this time and listen carefully to each other's comments. One very helpful initiative is the 'Pink for Think' time in which pupils are asked to quickly review any marking done by a teacher using pink ink: this means some extra thought needs to go into what the teacher has written and what pupils might do to improve their work next time. They take this opportunity very seriously.

The quality of planning is now good. This is a result of shared year group planning and better scrutiny by senior colleagues. This planning now often has three levels of challenge used to open opportunities for all, but especially for the most able.

There remain some generic caps on teaching quality, however. In some classes, expectations are safe rather than high. This is a result of lessons which are focused on the delivery of limited and pre-prepared content rather than responding to pupils' actual knowledge and skills. There are too few challenging supplementary questions evident, although the quality of questioning is much improved. In some classes, especially in Key Stage 1, pupils have limited opportunities for independent learning. Occasionally, teachers are very brisk in their delivery of lessons. Although helpful in maintaining pace, a variety of delivery styles would be more appropriate for some pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good in school, with positive attitudes to learning and good collaborative working whilst reading and discussing. Pupils are polite and courteous, and especially good with each other, apologising after minor accidents and including friends in games. This is evident even amongst the youngest age ranges. The pupils are generous to a fault and enjoy the various social, moral, spiritual and cultural activities that the school now organises. For example, during this monitoring visit, many pupils (and families and staff) contributed to the 'Ties for Thailand' event to raise awareness and funds for an orphanage in Thailand.

Bullying is described by pupils as 'not a big thing here'. Pupils are proud of their school and recognise the improvements taking place. The school puts high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe by diligently maintaining records and safe practices.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders and managers at the most senior level continue to act with ambition and rigour. The headteacher deploys resources well and has secured the commitment to school improvement and the support of the school community – pupils, staff and families. She manages change well and sets a rapid but thoughtful pace of change. In this, she is supported well by the Local Leader in Education and Chair of the Governing Body. Together, this team lead by example.

Leadership at the level below this is about to undergo yet more change, and some personnel are relatively new to their roles. This means monitoring and the use of school level data in producing robust action planning is less well developed. The emphasis has, correctly, been on improving classroom practice since the last inspection. This has been successful but the school strategic plan and hard strategic performance targets remain in draft form.

Governors have an increasing awareness of the school's performance via an analysis of pupil performance at class and year-group level. This information is drawn from the pupil progress meetings held termly. However, some of this data, although increasingly accurate, is not yet analysed with sufficient clarity to aid school development.

External support

The support and contribution of the LLE and subject consultants are beneficial and securing greater impact on school improvement.