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11 October 2013

Mr Mike Colcombe  
The Interim Headteacher  
St Pius X RC Primary School  
Gatehouse Avenue  
Withywood  
Bristol  
BS13 9AB

Dear Mr Colcombe

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Pius X RC Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 October 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 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 in the removal of special measures.

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

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 Director of Children's Services for Bristol and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching by:
  - giving honest and accurate feedback to teachers on how to improve their teaching
  - making sure staff training meets the specific needs of individual teachers and assistants
  - improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments, and using the information about pupils' attainment to set pupils' work at the right level for their different abilities
  - making sure that teachers ask pupils probing questions and deal quickly with any misunderstandings
  - making sure pupils are kept busy learning and understand what they have to do in lessons.
- Raise achievement in literacy by:
  - making sure all staff say the sounds that letters make accurately
  - organising reading lessons so that all pupils know what they are learning, and the books they are reading match the level of their ability
  - encouraging pupils to write at length more frequently
  - spending more time talking with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve the checks leaders and managers make on how well the school is doing by:
  - identifying why pupils are not achieving well enough, taking swift action to tackle weaknesses, and making sure managers and teachers are held responsible for how well the pupils do in their work
  - checking on how well money, in particular the additional government funding (pupil premium), is being used to raise standards
  - looking at the results of the checks that are made of teaching, and using the outcomes to see how the school can be improved rapidly.
- Improve the governance of the school by making sure members of the governing body:
  - review the pupils' progress more often so they can challenge the school leaders about it on a more frequent basis
  - are provided, by the school, with accurate information about the progress younger pupils are making in reading.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 October 2013**

### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, the Chair of Governors and another governor, a representative from the local authority and two groups of pupils. Brief discussions were held with other members of staff.

### **Context**

The school continues to be led by an interim headteacher. Since the last visit, the school has appointed a part-time special educational needs leader. Another part-time teacher started in September, specifically to help younger pupils catch up with their reading. The local authority and diocese are considering options for the school to become a sponsored academy.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Since last April, when the teachers' assessments were confirmed as accurate, pupils' progress in both reading and writing has picked up. Pupils are enjoying moving up the various stages in their reading programme and are pleased to be making headway. They are encouraged to take books home and complete their reading diaries. This is working well in most cases, although some pupils feel that their reading diaries are not checked by their teachers. The new programme, mainly for six-year-olds who have fallen behind in their reading, is showing early signs of success.

Pupils' progress in writing is also improving and accelerating. The majority of pupils in each class are supported by additional government funding (pupil premium) and these pupils have made good progress in writing. However, in the current Year 6, there is a very large gap between the attainment of pupils supported by pupil premium and those who are not. This gap needs closing as much as possible during this year.

Another group that is particularly vulnerable in the school is Year 1. Achievement for these pupils during their Reception year was very weak and they have a lot of catching up to do. All these pupils have been assessed as working below the levels expected for their age. During the visit, they were learning the relationship between letters and sounds (phonics) through a good range of activities, led effectively by both the teacher and teaching assistant. For these pupils, the teaching is, rightly, focusing as much on their personal and social development as their literacy and numeracy. The pupils are becoming familiar with routines and the teachers' expectations. The planned activities are laying the right foundations to prepare the

pupils for working within the National Curriculum requirements as soon as they are ready to do so.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving. This is notable in the Reception year where the weaknesses seen on the last visit are no longer evident. These children are now benefiting from a more appropriate range of activities, inside and outside, to support their learning and development. More attention is now given, in Reception, to developing the children's ability to talk confidently than at the time of the section 5 inspection. This is also the case higher up the school, where some teachers place good emphasis on pupils' speaking, often as a preparation for their writing. In the best examples, teachers demonstrate good speaking skills themselves, with clear articulation. They repeat pupils' sentences correctly, when they are ungrammatical, and use follow-up questions to extend pupils' vocabulary. There are some striking examples of teachers setting their sights high when it comes to pupils' speaking skills, but this is not yet widespread in all classes.

One of the aspects that prevent teaching from being good is when teachers do not check how well pupils are learning throughout the lesson. This can happen when pupils work independently and when teachers focus on one group for an extended period. Some teachers are extremely adept at checking all pupils' learning and making adjustments as the lesson proceeds. In an outstanding writing lesson, the teacher paused and asked the pupils to decide whether they felt ready to write an exciting opening paragraph, or whether they needed more help from an adult. The pupils quickly made their own decisions and those who were ready to write did so with great enthusiasm and commitment. Others were also soon under way, having had a little extra support. Adapting plans and putting pupils' learning first, in this way, tends to be the exception rather than the norm.

The quality and impact of learning support assistants remains variable. Some are highly aware of the main learning points of the lesson and make a striking contribution to pupils' learning. Others are more passive, too much so at times. They tend to focus mainly on managing pupils' participation and miss opportunities to support pupils with their actual learning.

There is clear evidence that the extra sessions, that help individual pupils with specific weaknesses in their reading and writing, are beginning to have an impact. Some of these are led by teachers from the interim headteacher's school. The next step for the school is to ensure that all class teachers use the information from their marking, or assessments, to adapt their plans and take account of what different pupils need to focus on next. This tailored approach is more successful in some classes than others.

Most teachers expect pupils to write regularly during each week. They mark pupils' work carefully, with helpful tips on how to improve. Some have high expectations and adopt an encouraging and enthusiastic approach. They expect pupils to do their best work, improve their first draft by introducing more interesting words and phrases, and to check their work through. The pupils rise well when challenged in this way and are proud when they have written a really good sentence or piece of work.

The training that teachers have received on 'guided reading' lessons is not yet leading to consistently good practice. The sessions observed during this visit were mixed in quality. Tasks are not always matched well to pupils' differing abilities, showing that not all teachers are making the most of the information from pupils' assessments. In one lesson, the pupils who had to work independently were not all given appropriate tasks. Some were given a limited number of spellings to write out and learn but were not allowed to do the harder ones on the list, even though some felt capable of spelling these. Another group was given a text to read, with questions to answer, but the text was too hard for them.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to be positive. The system of sanctions, in place at the last visit, is being applied consistently to encourage good behaviour for all. In one lesson, the teacher skilfully managed a pupil who was finding it difficult to participate, taking a firm but calm stance and not allowing other pupils' learning to be held back. Attendance rates are not improving as quickly as they should, especially in the classes lower down the school.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The interim headteacher has not let any time lapse since the teachers' assessments were confirmed as accurate last April. He has made sure each pupil's progress in reading, writing and mathematics is rigorously and regularly checked. The close attention to monitoring pupils' progress is starting to have an impact. There is now a much stronger sense of teachers being held accountable for the progress their pupils make. The arrangements for managing teachers' performance are much more rigorous. All teachers have targets linked to improving pupils' progress, which is entirely appropriate and necessary.

The interim headteacher has been very astute in arranging for additional small-group teaching for specific pupils, by bringing in staff from his own school or through additional posts. The appointment of an experienced teacher, to lead provision for pupils with special educational needs, has strengthened the leadership team considerably. This leader has been quick to review the school's provision for this group, analyse all pupils' progress, identify priorities and make changes. A lot

has been achieved in a relatively short time but it is too early days to see the impact of this work on pupils' achievement.

The interim headteacher's judgements on the quality of teaching continue to be accurate. His leadership is improving the overall quality of teaching in the school and, in turn, pupils' progress. However, not all leaders demonstrate strong leadership capacity and the school's leadership now needs to strengthen at other levels. All teachers who receive additional salary for various leadership responsibilities need to play a clear and demonstrable role in the school's continuing and further improvement. This particularly applies to leaders who have been in leadership posts for some years, as opposed to those who have only recently taken these on.

The governors who are members of the standards and pastoral committee are asking more searching questions about how well pupils are making progress and are better informed. This is an improvement since the last visit. Although the Chair of Governors has delegated responsibility for monitoring pupils' achievement to this committee, it has left him, and the remaining members of the full governing body, with too little knowledge of where the school is on its journey of improvement. Since the last visit, the full governing body has not met frequently enough to ensure a sharp focus on the four areas that were identified at the school's inspection, so that all governors are aware how much progress the school is making in tackling them. The Chair of Governors is committed to the school's success, but does not have sufficient grasp of the essential aspects of governing a school requiring special measures.

### **External support**

The support that the local authority has brokered from the interim headteacher's school is having a positive impact on the school's improvement, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The local authority is keeping in close touch with the school's improvement, through the school improvement officer's regular visits and the meetings of its progress review group. The review group has an accurate view of the school's improvement in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The local authority's influence on the role of the full governing body has not been as successful. Its view of the effectiveness of governance is more optimistic than the findings of this visit suggest.