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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 Dennis Brittain, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25-26 November, 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 fourth 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.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection with prior discussion with HMI.

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 Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan
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.

- Increase 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 25–26 November 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the full senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a team of fellow governors. A telephone conversation was held with the supporting headteacher. Inspectors observed twenty lessons and carried out a scrutiny of a sample of pupil work books and key school strategic documents.

Context

The school, although much more settled, continues to go through a period of staffing change. Some of this is unavoidable. Since the last monitoring inspection the deputy headteacher has resigned and the school is currently close to appointing a successor. Some staff have returned following maternity leave and others have left.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The current levels of performance are now improving rapidly but with some gaps in the relative performance of some groups of pupils emerging as all improve. The groups that now make less progress than their peers include the most-able pupils in writing and pupils who are entitled to pupil premium. Standards at age 7 remain worryingly low. However even these groups are also improving in their performance. There is no significant difference in the relative performance of girls and boys.

In 2013 over 80% of all pupils reached the required level and around 40% reached the higher levels in mathematics and reading. This is an impressive improvement on previous levels. The performance in writing has similarly improved but with only a quarter achieving the higher level. However the school leaders were disappointed with the results of the national assessments at age 7. Here, despite some improvement, around 70% reached the required levels in reading and two thirds in mathematics. This is a legacy of previous underperformance but remains a concern.

The picture above is, however, to be taken in the context of considerable improvement. Pupils read fluently, know and use phonics well, construct sentences and use grammatical tools well. For example, one pupil was very keen to know how he could use semi colons more effectively. They show a love of books and enjoy the guided reading sessions. Pupils write at length and for different purposes, using a full range of adjectives well to make their text more interesting to the reader.

In mathematics pupils now have a fluency in number and can add, subtract and divide two digit numbers accurately, including working with negatives. They know

shapes and can draw and interpret graphs well. The school has worked hard recently to improve the standards in number and this hard work is paying dividends.

The quality of teaching

There was no inadequate teaching seen during the inspection. Much of the teaching is now good and there are some growing examples of outstanding practice. These include strong and positive relationships with pupils, well-planned lessons, engaging activities and a keen awareness that curriculum development remains a focus. There are frequent projects and initiatives that help to make the pupils' experiences interesting and stimulating. This includes, for example, the recent 'Take Over Day' when pupils from Year 6 took over the running of the school, including helping with site management, administrative function, assemblies and other work. They are proud of their contribution to school improvement as a result.

Questioning by teachers which is used to promote deeper thinking is much improved and expectations are, in most classes, high. Some inconsistencies remain however and there is some variation between year groups about the levels of expectation. At its best pupils engage with a well-planned series of problems, pitched at a good level of challenge, and respond to open and thoughtful questions by teachers. This was seen in Year 6 for example, where pupils explored the relationship between negative numbers in solving a problem and in Year 4 where pupils had to manipulate fractions of chocolate bars to make sure they got the most!

Despite the good examples above, the strongest teaching seen tended to be in literacy lessons rather than mathematics and is especially strong in phonics

Some generic weaknesses mentioned in previous reports are still evident occasionally however. These include too much time spent on the teacher introducing the lesson restricting time spent on the actual content. In some classes, an emphasis on 'task presentation' delays pupils from just getting 'stuck in' to their activities more quickly.

The school now has a rigorous assessment and review process. Teachers are more accurate in their views of the pupils' actual performance and, as a consequence, use target setting well. The new approach to marking is being diligently applied across the school. This is based on 'green for good and pink for think' where pupils are routinely congratulated on what they have done well but also prompted on what they could do to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good: the pupils show an enthusiasm for their lessons and engage well with active and problem solving sessions. Pupils are proud of their school and, as one pupil described it, 'value everyone equally'. She went on to say that the school

choir takes anyone who just wants to sing and then teaches them to sing well. 'We have anyone who is keen' she said. They say bullying doesn't really happen and 'just wouldn't'. They are polite and courteous. Any incidence of over boisterous behaviour is quickly dealt with. Attitudes to learning are good.

Pupils have a keen awareness of healthy lifestyles and respect each other's views when listening. In most classes there is a strong emphasis on discussion and pupils hear what each other has to say with patience and courtesy. The old 'passive' response to lessons has gone and, as lessons become more interesting, pupils increasingly thrive on the extra challenges. This means they show higher levels of independence. In one nursery class the children cleared away after a busy session and all sat patiently waiting for the next session in their tidy classroom within 5 minutes and without any prompt from their teacher.

The school meets all safeguarding requirements fully.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership at the most senior level remains strongly focussed on school improvement and is proactive and effective. The governing body has made huge strides to improve the way the members hold the school to account and are now good. This includes attending recent training, a greater awareness of the schools performance data and priorities and a closer relationship with classroom practice through the curriculum leaders' system. They have rearranged their cycle of monitoring to contribute to the annual cycle of school planning and use the extensive expertise they bring to the role to help shape strategic thinking. There are two current vacancies but the governors have a well thought out plan to recruit new governors with particular skills to bring wider expertise to the group. There are plans to refine the use of data to capture some more precise messages which will then be used to develop genuine depth in the school strategic planning documents.

The wider leadership team is still undergoing some unavoidable changes and many are new to their role. However there is now a sense of ambition and a collaborative focus on monitoring and evaluation that is helping to improve standards of teaching.

External support

External advice and support is good overall, although variable in quality for some subjects. The support of the consultant Local Leader in Education based in a nearby partner school has been invaluable and the local authority project group has helped focus on key priorities well. This package of support is helping to secure the required improvements.