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6 December 2013

Mrs C Price
The Headteacher
St John the Evangelist CofE Primary School
Bluebell Way
Carterton
OX18 1JF

Dear Mrs Price

Special measures monitoring inspection of St John the Evangelist CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 and 5 December 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 November 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 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 Oxfordshire and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, so none is inadequate and much more is good by:
 - giving teachers support so that they can accurately mark pupils' work and tell pupils precisely how they can improve
 - making sure that teachers use what they already know about pupils to match activities to pupils' abilities
 - ensuring that teachers tell pupils clearly what they will be learning in each lesson
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn actively in lessons.
- Improve rates of progress in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - plan how pupils will make progress in lessons, throughout the year and from year to year
 - give more difficult work to the more able pupils.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that teachers in Years 5 and 6 consistently apply what is written in the behaviour policy.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by providing appropriate training so that leaders and managers:
 - understand and analyse information about pupils' achievement, especially for different groups, and use this to identify areas for improvement
 - regularly review the impact of actions taken
 - check on the quality of teaching, and hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make
 - make sure the management of teachers' performance is used so that salary increases are closely linked to good, and improving teaching.
- Make sure that governors hold senior leaders and managers more robustly to account by:
 - having accurate information about pupils' achievement
 - asking demanding questions about the impact of actions taken by leaders and managers.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 December 2013

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with staff, pupils, two members the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

At the end of the summer term two teachers left the school. Two teachers have been appointed. There are three vacancies on the governing body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

At the end of July 2013, attainment at the end of Year 2 was broadly in line with national averages. Although attainment in writing was lower than reading and mathematics, it was above the national average for writing. However, girls' attainment was below that of the boys' in all subjects, and girls attained significantly less well than the boys in mathematics. Attainment for Year 6 pupils was below the national average in writing and mathematics. In reading it was well below the attainment of all pupils nationally and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling it was significantly below the national average. Standards in the Year 1 phonic (the sounds letters make) screening check improved in 2013, but remained below the national average. The proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonic screening check was well below the national average. The school's own information shows that the attainment for all other year groups is variable. Attainment in writing is below reading and mathematics in all year groups. Pupils' progress remains variable. In Year 6, current attainment in writing and mathematics shows that pupils will need to make rapid progress in order to achieve nationally expected levels of attainment by the end of the summer term. In Year 2, accelerated progress is required to enable pupils to achieve standards in line with the national average. There continues to be some variability in the achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Their progress is not consistent. However, additional support programmes are beginning to have a positive impact on the learning and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Teaching assistants support these pupils well, both in class and during support programmes. For example, in reading, some pupils have caught up and made sufficient progress to narrow the gap in their attainment compared to other pupils.

Assessment systems are becoming more embedded, but there remains some variation in the accuracy of ongoing assessments of pupils' learning by some teachers.

Pupils have a better understanding of the levels they are working towards. They know their targets and understand what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils

would benefit from knowing what they need to do to reach the next level of attainment in order to accelerate their progress.

Since the previous monitoring visit, senior leaders have implemented new presentation and handwriting policies. This has had a significant impact on improving the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation in their work. Pupils' work is now presented neatly. Across the school, pupils' handwriting has improved significantly. Pupils in all year groups are developing these skills well. Their writing is joined, legible and well orientated.

The quality of teaching

An increasing number of lessons are taught with greater confidence and understanding of what needs to be done to help pupils to make faster progress, especially in mathematics. Teachers use what they know about pupils' achievement to match interesting and practical activities to their needs and abilities more closely. Most teachers are becoming adept at making sure pupils know the purpose of the lesson and what they are expected to achieve by the conclusion of the lesson. However, not all teaching is of a consistently high enough quality to make a difference to the progress pupils make over time. Some teachers do not explain the learning activities well enough and expectations are not made clear to pupils. This hinders pupils from increasing their rates of progress.

There is greater consistency in the setting and checking of pupils' targets in writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils understand their targets and most teachers use marking comments to better effect to guide pupils about how to improve their work. In addition, in most classes, pupils are provided with dedicated time to respond to marking comments and show their improvements.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour has improved. In lessons and around the school, pupils are polite and courteous. They generally have positive attitudes to learning and concentrate well in lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of the newly-introduced behaviour policy and understand the rewards they receive when they behave well, and also the consequences if their behaviour falls short of the school's expectations. There is a greater consistency in the management of behaviour. On the rare occasions when challenging behaviour is displayed, adults succeed in diffusing situations which enable pupils to refocus on learning. Pupils said they enjoy school and feel they are learning more in lessons. This is evident in the improvement in attendance which is higher this autumn term compared to the same period during the last academic year.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully raised expectations and check on the quality of teaching regularly. Their judgements are accurate. However, more needs to be done to follow up on weaknesses identified through lesson

observations, particularly in relation to the progress of different groups of pupils. The evaluation of the quality of teaching has enabled senior leaders to hold teachers to account. A broader range of evidence to support judgements on the quality of teaching over time is now required to strengthen and sustain the improvements which have already taken place.

The mathematics subject leader has had a positive impact on the teaching of mathematics. The progression of learning in lessons is consistent across the school and now ensures that pupils' knowledge and skills build on their prior learning. However, for some pupils, previous gaps in their learning are hampering their progress. More now needs to be done to identify the causes of underachievement and plan additional support to enable these pupils to catch up.

At the time of the previous inspection, reading, writing and the teaching of phonics were not judged to be a focus for improvement. This is now not the case. The results at the end of 2013 and the current tracking of pupils' progress show that improving pupils' achievement in reading, writing and phonics are an additional area for development. Senior leaders have provided increased support in the leadership of English by building a team of middle leaders to support the subject leader. Sharper action plans to measure the success of strategies and drive rapid improvement are now required.

The special educational needs coordinator is closely monitoring the progress of all disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Additional training and support have been provided to ensure teaching assistants delivering specific programmes of support have the necessary skills to enable pupils to make better progress.

The headteacher has been instrumental in ensuring a smooth leadership transition in the spring term. The headteacher designate has regularly attended meetings with senior leaders and staff to develop policies and plan for the next phase of the school's development.

A recent strategic review of governance, carried out by the local authority, has been accepted by the governing body. As a result, the governing body has been restructured to enable the work of governors to be more closely aligned to the school's cycle of improvement. Governors now have a better understanding of the information they receive about pupils' achievement and the expectations required to ensure pupils' achievement improves rapidly. Governors are asking searching questions and are challenging school leaders to increase rates of pupils' progress.

External support

The local authority has provided a range of effective support. The local authority officer has made regular visits to support the senior leadership team. Support has been provided for the English and mathematics subject leaders, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the special educational needs coordinator. The

behaviour support service has also provided training for all staff in positive behaviour management strategies, which has been successful.

Priority for further improvement

- Increase rates of pupils' progress and raise levels of attainment for all pupils across the school in reading, phonics and writing, by the end of the summer term 2014.