

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com



6 December 2013

Mrs Amanda Woolcombe
Executive Headteacher
St Edward's Catholic Primary School
New Road
Sheerness
Kent ME12 1BW

Dear Mrs Woolcombe

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with David Webster, Additional Inspector, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 Interim Improvement Board and the Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills for Kent.

Yours sincerely
Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by making sure that:
 - teachers expect pupils to take a more active role in their learning and complete more work
 - teachers make sure that all pupils understand how to improve their work and have time to respond to the comments teachers write in marking
 - teachers give pupils work that builds on what they can already do, especially for more-able pupils
 - teachers learn from the outstanding practice that exists within the federation and local network of schools.
- Improve learning in the Reception class by making sure that:
 - children have more opportunities to be independent and learn by choosing their own activities
 - activities set out for children to choose from are carefully planned to target specific learning needs.
- Improve the quality of leadership by making sure that:
 - where teaching is less than good, teachers are given effective guidance and short-term targets to aim for that improve their performance rapidly
 - subject leaders and other leaders keep a close check on teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
 - the school improvement plan gives details about what should be achieved at interim stages, and these are checked to see whether everything is improving quickly enough
 - leaders evaluate how well the spending on additional help for pupils is working
 - senior leaders look for patterns in pupils' behaviour to ensure that they identify how it can be improved over time.
- Improve the governance of the school by:
 - developing the skills of the governing body, especially their understanding of information from tests and assessments in relation to other schools nationally
 - ensuring that governors have all the information required to help them challenge the school's leaders more effectively.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, the subject leaders for English and mathematics and a representative from the local authority. No governor was available for a discussion with inspectors. Every class was visited and teaching and learning were observed in 14 lessons. Half of the observations were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher. Behaviour and safety were judged to require improvement at the last section 5 inspection which was better than other aspects of the school's work. It did not form part of this monitoring inspection.

Context

There have been significant changes since the first monitoring inspection in July. On 2 December 2013 the federation with St Peter's Primary School was dissolved. An interim improvement board is currently responsible for the governance of the school. An application is being made by the local authority for the improvement board to become an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The board was established at the same time as the arrival of the new executive headteacher in the last week of September. The executive headteacher is seconded from another school for three days a week for the next 18 months. Five new teachers have joined since July. Responsibility for Year 5 is shared by two part-time teachers. The teachers in Year 2 and Year 4 are seconded from the previously federated school until July 2014. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) joined in September for two days a week. The Reception class is currently being taught by a temporary teacher due to staff absence. Plans for the school to convert to an academy as part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership are at the very early stages.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The decline in standards in reading, writing and mathematics has not been dealt with quickly enough since the school was judged to require special measures. From their low starting points when they join the school pupils continue to underachieve and fail to catch up. Significant gaps remain in their skills and understanding. Standards by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 continue to be too low so they are ill prepared for their secondary school education.

Pupils' early reading and writing skills are poor. In the Year 1 phonics screening check this summer just over one quarter of pupils reached the standard expected for their age, a significantly smaller proportion than nationally.

All groups of pupils make equally poor progress, including the most able and pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding. Gaps in their attainment and the attainment of similar pupils nationally have widened.

The new executive headteacher has quickly identified that the school's own information about standards in reading, writing and mathematics and the progress that pupils make in each class is inaccurate. Teachers have been given support and guidance to help them make better judgements. Their most recent assessments have been checked by the local authority who has confirmed that they are now more reliable. Senior leaders still have concerns about the quality of judgments made in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Learning and progress seen in lessons, in pupils' books and the school's checks at the end of October confirm the lack of improvement. The executive headteacher has rightly identified that pupils have a long way to go and need to make rapid progress to catch up. There are fundamental weaknesses in their understanding of grammar, number and mental calculation skills that need to be tackled quickly. Pupils do not have the confidence to use what they know about the sounds that letters make (phonics) to spell words correctly and read with fluency and understanding because this is not encouraged enough by adults in every lesson.

The quality of teaching

Pupils continue to underachieve because the quality of teaching has not improved since the last inspection. Targets for improving teaching in the local authority statement of action and the school's improvement plan have been missed. Too many lessons fail to involve pupils and help them make progress. Learning was inadequate in just under half of the lessons seen. Good learning and progress were seen in too few of the lessons.

Pupils' progress is limited because expectations are not high enough in all lessons and pupils complete too little work in the time available. Teachers do not consistently plan lessons which build step-by-step on what pupils already know, and move them on to what they need to learn next. Work is not pitched at the right level for pupils. At times, all pupils are given the same task or have to work through the same steps at the same pace, regardless of their different abilities. As a consequence, work is either too difficult or too easy. The most able pupils are not challenged to develop their understanding and others struggle with what they are expected to do. When this happens pupils start to lose interest and the pace of learning slows.

Practical activities, sharing the aim of the lesson and identifying how pupils will know whether they have been successful are common features. However, in weaker lessons seen, such as design and technology and science, it was unclear precisely what pupils were learning. The activities were not appropriately matched to the aim of the lesson. Teaching was focused more on pupils completing the activity rather than building or using their knowledge and skills.

Teachers and teaching assistants do not check carefully enough in lessons how well all pupils are learning, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Skilful questions to encourage pupils to explain their ideas and test their understanding are limited, so pupils are not moved on as soon as they are ready and errors they make are not spotted or corrected quickly. In one lesson the teacher did not listen to the response from one pupil so an opportunity was missed to develop their good idea. The quality of support provided by the many teaching assistants in lessons is too variable to help pupils learn well.

In Reception, activities are poorly organised and not matched carefully to pupils' learning and development needs. Routines to help children become more independent are not in place and adults do not check regularly what pupils are learning. As a result children either remain on one activity for too long, such as a small group of boys on bicycles, or move quickly from one activity to another gaining little. Time was wasted and an opportunity lost for children to learn how to do things for themselves when they sat with aprons on waiting for the teaching assistant to put out all the equipment they needed. Too few of the activities that children can choose for themselves give them the chance to practise their reading, writing and number skills.

Pupils' work is marked regularly and in line with the school's agreed approach. Comments are included to help pupils know what can be improved. The quality of comments, however, is variable. Pupils are not given time to act on the comments and teachers do not check that the points they make are acted on.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher's analysis of the lack of progress that has been made so far is candid and accurate. The situation has been shared with governors and weaknesses clearly identified that need to be dealt with urgently to make up for time lost since March. The executive headteacher has taken steps quickly to eradicate inadequate teaching but these have been too recent to tackle underperformance across the school sufficiently.

All teachers have been set targets to help improve their practice and accelerate the progress that pupils make in their classes. The head of school's new job description rightly emphasises leading improvements in teaching and learning, including by supporting and working alongside staff. Staff are eager to improve and welcome the support and training that they are now being given. Targets to help teaching assistants increase their effectiveness have not yet been set.

The English and mathematics subject leaders are new to their roles. They are still learning what is expected of subject leaders and how they must help drive improvements across the school. They now have a better understanding about the school's performance information and how it compares to all schools nationally

because the information has been shared and discussed with them by the executive headteacher. However, they do not yet know how to use the information they now have. They have written plans to improve their subjects but are not clear how they will check that actions are making a difference quickly enough.

The school's plan for improvement and the local authority's statement of action have both been amended and are now fit for purpose. They provide a clear direction for improvement and include details of what needs to be achieved at stages throughout the year to reach the goals set. Measures of success are specifically linked to accelerating pupils' progress and closing gaps in each classes and different subjects.

Additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has not been used effectively to help them make better progress. Current leaders have spent time looking into how resources have been used and have stopped spending on any that are not making a difference.

A behaviour policy and arrangements to check any incidents have been put in place but there is not enough information because they are still too new to identify any patterns or trends in pupils' behaviour.

Governance arrangements have changed significantly since the beginning of October so the external review of governance that was undertaken in the summer is no longer relevant. Key members of the interim improvement board are knowledgeable and understand the information they are given about the school. They meet with leaders regularly to review the school's performance. They ask challenging questions to hold leaders accountable for the improvements needed and visit the school to see for themselves that changes are being made. Although sharply focused on improving teaching and learning, current leadership arrangements are too new to have made up for lost ground.

External support

A new school improvement adviser has visited the school regularly since September. A local authority teaching and learning adviser has given support to staff to improve weak aspects of their classroom practice. Teachers have attended training courses and visited other local schools to observe good teaching. However, none of this support has not made enough difference to the quality of teaching and learning. Help from the local authority lead on assessment has been more successful and made sure that the school has a more accurate picture of standards and progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics from which improvements can now be measured. The executive headteacher will need support from governors, the diocese and local authority to improve teaching and learning rapidly and make up for time lost.