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13 December 2013

Mr Darren Dudman
Headteacher
Ripon Cathedral Church of England Primary School
Priest Lane
Ripon
North Yorkshire
HG4 1LT

Dear Mr Dudman

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ripon Cathedral Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 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 December 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 without discussion with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service for North Yorkshire and the Director of Education for the diocese of Ripon, Bradford and Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching to be consistently good or better by:
 - dealing with inadequate teaching robustly
 - setting work at the right level for all groups of pupils
 - developing effective methods for teaching basic skills in different subjects in Key Stage 2
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils know how to improve their work and are given time to do so
 - planning lessons that capture pupils' interest and allow them to make choices about their learning.

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring targets are based on an accurate understanding of pupils' needs and are regularly reviewed with pupils and parents so that pupils make at least comparable progress to pupils nationally
 - checking individual pupils' progress, and that of groups, regularly to ensure those who are not doing as well as they should are identified quickly and swift action is taken to boost their progress.

- Improve the ability of leaders at all levels to make lasting improvements by:
 - implementing a rigorous programme to check and improve the quality of teaching
 - clarifying leadership roles and responsibilities so all staff contribute to school improvement
 - ensuring that actions and ways of measuring success in the school's improvement plans are focused on improving pupils' achievement.

- Improve the governing body's knowledge of the school's work and how well pupils are doing, so that they can hold school leaders to account for improving pupils' achievement.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 December 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, looked at pupils' literacy, numeracy and their 'super' books. She met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, groups of pupils and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The inspector did not investigate governance in detail during this inspection.

Context

During the monitoring inspection, a member of the senior leadership was away. Since half term, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader's class is being covered, during their planned absence, by a supply teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 in their 2013 national tests were disappointing and pupils did less well in mathematics and writing compared to reading. In addition, not enough pupils, especially girls, made the progress expected of them in mathematics compared to the national picture. Leaders are aware that the gap between the pupils supported by the government's pupil premium funding and others did not close as expected. This was most evident in mathematics.

The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 and their levels of attainment was better in 2013 compared to the previous year with an above-average number of pupils reaching the higher Level 3. This picture of pupils reaching the higher levels did not happen for pupils at the end of Year 6. Consequently, older pupils, particularly the more-able, did not do as well as they should.

School data for all pupils in each year group this term show a more positive picture. Most groups of pupils are making expected progress but it is inconsistent in some year groups and generally weaker still in writing and mathematics.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books during the monitoring inspection show a better picture in pupils' progress compared to that seen during the previous monitoring inspection. The quality of teaching, although improved, is still varied and has not yet had sufficient impact so that the progress all pupils make in English and mathematics improves.

The quality of teaching

Since the previous monitoring inspection, senior leaders have ensured that there is more consistency in quality when teachers mark pupils' books. Pupils respond regularly to teachers' comments. These tell pupils clearly how to improve, but also gives them examples so that they are more likely to respond correctly. Lesson observations, done jointly with

senior leaders, reflect some variability still within the school. This inconsistency has an impact on the uneven progress made by different groups of pupils in different year groups. All teachers have detailed information about pupils' capabilities, which they use when planning lessons. However, translating this information into appropriate work for all groups of pupils is not firmly embedded.

Teaching assistants play an important role in learning, but there is a need to consider carefully how they support pupils and whether it is appropriate for them to spend all their time with those who are less-able. A new reading and writing programme is taught regularly, mainly to pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The programme is contributing well to pupils' understanding and knowledge of how to decipher tricky words.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are articulate and are happy to discuss their view of how the school is now compared to how it was a year ago. They share ideas in lessons and help each other when one or other is stuck with a problem. There is less evidence than previously of pupils being disengaged because work does not meet their needs sufficiently well. Older pupils are involved in a range of charitable and leadership activities which help them understand about others less fortunate than themselves. In discussion with the inspector, many said that they would like to study a wide range of subjects routinely. Senior leaders recognise that this view is accurate and are looking closely to ensure that all subjects, other than literacy and numeracy, have prominence and are taught regularly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership has been strengthened with the addition to the senior team of the leaders for literacy and numeracy. Roles are clear and all members of the team understand the need for the school to improve rapidly. A number of monitoring activities take place regularly and these, in conjunction with careful analysis of data, mean that leaders can identify and react to any potential problems. Leaders responded swiftly to weaknesses apparent following the national tests this year, introducing new programmes and providing training so staff know how to teach pupils properly. There is, however, more work to be done with improving pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is a priority. Although the whole-school action plan includes milestones, the plans for literacy and numeracy need to be strengthened so that leaders can measure regularly the impact of new systems and procedures.

Staff have responsibility for different subject areas. At present, apart from the leaders of literacy and numeracy, their work in monitoring and developing their subjects is underdeveloped.

It is pleasing to note that issues identified in the previous monitoring inspection are being acted upon as well as leaders becoming more able to identify and solve problems themselves. Being proactive is important as the school continues its journey through special measures.

External support

The local authority continues to keep in close contact with leaders and it completed a review of progress in November 2013. Its support plan has been amended to reflect a longer timescale than previously. Although there are some measurable indicators, some are very general and do not consider the progress being made by all groups of pupils. The school has sought help from external sources to improve leadership and the quality of teaching. Evidence during the monitoring inspection confirms that staff have begun to implement some of the strategies learnt during these programmes.

Additional priorities:

- Ensure that all subject leaders are equipped with the skills needed so that they can monitor and evaluate their subject area effectively.