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17 January 2014

Pam Edwards
Holy Trinity Church of England Primary
Middleton Road
Oswestry
Shropshire
SY11 2LF

Dear Mrs Edwards

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Trinity Church of England Primary

Following my visit with Denah Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 15–16 January 2014, 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 February 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 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 Executive Board, The Diocese of Lichfield and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should attain
 - making sure teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan lessons which meet the individual needs of all pupils so that they make good progress
 - making sure teachers provide clear guidance to children working independently in the Early Years Foundation Stage about what they are learning and what they need to do to succeed
 - ensuring the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage is used more effectively to promote children's learning.

- Make sure leaders and managers are effective in driving improvement by:
 - having clear and up-to-date plans to tackle weaknesses
 - rigorously and thoroughly checking that teachers consistently enable pupils to make good progress
 - making sure that subject leaders provide the necessary training that improves teachers' skills
 - providing more opportunities that promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of older pupils
 - providing governors with the accurate information they need so that they can check pupils' progress and the quality of teaching to see how quickly the school is improving.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by making sure that teachers plan work that interests and holds the attention of the whole class.

- Improve governance by:
 - raising the awareness of members of the governing body of the importance of holding the school's leaders to account
 - increasing governors' knowledge and understanding of their roles so that they can carry them out effectively.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 15–16 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and leaders of English and mathematics, the learning mentor and a member of the behaviour support team who is working at the school. They also met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a group of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the school has experienced a period of unavoidable turbulence at senior leadership level, because of compassionate leave for illness and bereavements. A substantive headteacher took up post at the start of this term and the overall situation is now more stable. Two experienced teachers have been seconded to the school in order to strengthen the teaching in Key Stage 2. The coordinator for special educational needs is currently absent from school.

The local authority has taken action to replace the governing body with an interim executive board. The board has recently had its first meeting. Discussions are taking place about the future status of the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The recently published *RAISEonline* report confirmed the improvement in attainment noted at the last inspection, but also that pupils in last year's Year 6 did not fulfil their potential. Taken overall, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 rose and came closer to the national average. However, the results also showed that the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and supported through pupil premium funding was about two terms behind that of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics, and the gap between these two groups of pupils widened. The proportion of pupils who made the progress expected of them across Key Stage 2 was below the national median in all three subjects. Ensuring that all pupils make at least the progress they should and that pupils supported through pupil premium funding do as well as their classmates is a key priority for the school.

In many lessons during this inspection, pupils made good progress. In several mathematics lessons at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils deepened their knowledge and understanding because the work was appropriately pitched, adapted to the needs of groups and presented in ways that captured their interest. For example, younger pupils enjoyed working out how many ways two numbers can combine to make ten by placing 'passengers' onto two buses. Older pupils applied their mathematical knowledge by deciding how to solve a problem and checked their

answer by trying a different method. Sometimes, however, pupils were prevented from making even better progress because the teachers had not considered carefully what the next mathematical step might be, or because the work pupils were given when they had finished was more of the same, rather than of increasing complexity or difficulty.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children recently admitted to the Nursery class have settled in well. The 'learning journey' books clearly show that children's learning and progress in all of the areas of learning are regularly observed and next steps identified. The children are proud of their special books and are keen to talk about what is in them. Similarly, in the Reception class, teachers collect examples of what children have done or been involved in. The teachers do not use the information equally skilfully to evaluate what has been learned and what children need to learn next.

The quality of teaching

There is a growing proportion of teaching that is reliably good. Some still requires improvement, which means that pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of in lessons and over time, especially but not exclusively in Key Stage 2. The school is not yet able to demonstrate the impact that teaching is having on pupils' progress. A lot of time and effort has gone into setting up a system to track attainment and progress. However, teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment have not always been accurate and reliable, despite the training they had over the past year. The recent evaluations of the progress pupils made over the autumn term showed huge variations from class to class and between subjects and did not correlate with the quality of the teaching. This indicates that the starting points had not always been identified accurately.

Teachers have now pasted targets in the form of National Curriculum level descriptions into pupils' writing and mathematics books. This is a positive step that serves a dual purpose; it ensures that teachers become increasingly familiar with what is expected for each year group and it enables pupils themselves to assess their own learning and progress. Further work has taken place to strengthen teachers' ability to ascribe levels accurately and to develop a shared understanding of what work at each level looks like. Staff have discussed the information in the recent *RAISEonline* report. They have also seen how much progress current pupils need to make in order to catch up on where they should be. Teachers now understand that everyone is responsible for ensuring good progress in each year group.

There are many additional adults in classes at times. Generally, they are appropriately deployed and they understand what is expected of them. They typically work well with individuals and groups. There are occasions, however, when they intervene too swiftly to prevent mistakes or do some of the thinking for the

pupils. Teaching assistants and the learning mentor work very well with individual pupils who have particular needs and who may not be able to cope in class. This is enabling some pupils to remain in school and to continue to learn.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In most of the lessons observed, in the playground and at lunch time, the pupils behaved well. They played sociably with one another, worked co-operatively in pairs and groups, and showed respect for the adults working with them. However, pupils' behaviour is not always as good as it should be. In one class taught by a supply teacher that the pupils did not know, the pupils were not as respectful of the teacher as they should have been. Although their behaviour was not poor, low-level disruption, such as chatting and not listening, slowed their progress. Where teaching is strong, pupils show enthusiasm and a desire to learn and do well. Pupils' behaviour during assemblies is excellent.

There is a small number of pupils whose behaviour can be challenging. Over the last academic year, the rate of exclusion was high because some of these pupils were repeatedly excluded for short periods. It was recognised that this course of action was not having the desired effect and, although it was preventing disruptions to the learning of others, it was not resulting in improvements in behaviour for the individuals who were excluded. The school now operates a system of internal exclusion, where those few pupils who are unable to manage their behaviour in class are taught separately. Fixed-term exclusions now only happen following exceptionally poor behaviour. The rate of fixed-term exclusion has dropped considerably since the start of this academic year. Improvements in teaching also mean that some pupils now do not want to miss what is happening in the classroom and are able to spend longer as part of the whole class. Better teaching is also giving pupils an incentive to be at school on time in the mornings, and punctuality is improving.

Attendance figures for the last academic year were well below the national average. The fixed-term exclusions contributed to this, as did the number of days lost when pupils were taken on holiday during term-time. The learning mentor has been working closely with the local authority's education welfare officer to good effect. So far this year, attendance is much higher than at the same point last year and is in line with the school's target for attendance.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Despite the fact that the school is not yet where it should be on its journey towards the removal of special measures, there are encouraging signs of improvement. The previous acting headteacher and associate headteacher worked well together to establish systems that were lacking and to take steps to begin to deal with areas of weakness. They supported the professional development of staff members and

promoted the sharing of expertise. The absence of strength and depth in leadership at other levels and in governance limited the impact, however, particularly when absences brought added pressure.

The appointment of the new headteacher, in conjunction with the secondment of two experienced and skilled teachers, adds considerable strength to the leadership team. It has also served to boost morale. Throughout this inspection, members of staff spoke of a renewed optimism and confidence. It is clear that the climate in school has changed for the better. In addition, existing subject and phase leaders are beginning to grow and develop in their roles and to understand the part that they have to play in driving improvement in their areas of responsibility. They are rising to the challenge. Appropriate action is being taken to deal with remaining weaknesses, both in leadership and teaching.

The establishment of the interim executive board is also a positive move. Roles, responsibilities and boundaries are much clearer. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the board know that their role is to keep the school firmly on track for improvement and to oversee the transition until a new governing body is established when the school's future is decided. To this end, a clear protocol for monitoring and evaluation has been drawn up. The board is to meet once every four weeks and the separate monitoring group will meet every half-term, reflecting an appropriate sense of urgency.

All parties fully understand that progress has been too slow. They now express a determination that the school's effectiveness will improve at a rapid pace. The headteacher has a secure understanding of what needs to be done. In a very short time, she has drawn up a revised plan for improvement and has reviewed key policies. She has ensured that the school's procedures for protecting pupils and keeping them safe are up to date and fit for purpose. Equally importantly, her positive outlook and drive for improvement have reassured and re-energised staff.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide a good deal of support to the school, both for the development of teaching and learning and for behaviour and attendance. Support is well-targeted and is having a positive impact. The local authority's decision to remove the previous governing body and to establish the interim executive board was timely and appropriate. This means that the school is now much better placed to move forwards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Review the use of pupil premium funding in order to maximise the impact on the progress of pupils it is intended to support.