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Miss Julie Stanton
Headteacher
St Giles Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Starkholmes Road
Matlock
DE4 3DD

Dear Miss Stanton

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Giles Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 February, 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 June 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.

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 Derbyshire and the Director of Education for Derbyshire Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - lessons are planned more precisely to enable all groups of pupils, including those who find learning more difficult and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, to learn at a more rapid rate
 - lessons proceed at a challenging pace so that pupils are required to respond quickly and their interest in what they are learning is maintained throughout the lesson
 - teachers ask questions that challenge all pupils to think deeply about their learning more frequently during lessons
 - the good practice that is beginning to emerge is shared systematically to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all classes.

- Improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers review and revise as necessary the way in which they teach phonics so that older pupils who are behind in their reading receive the support they need
 - most pupils make the progress that is expected and a substantial proportion make more than expected progress so that they attain higher standards in all aspects of literacy and numeracy
 - the individual or additional support given to pupils who find learning difficult is more focused on pupils' needs, particularly in the case of pupils who join Key Stage 2 with weak writing and numeracy skills
 - teachers in all classes provide regular opportunities for pupils to refine their numeracy skills by using them to solve real-life problems, and encourage them to work more independently without waiting for help and direction.

- Improve the leadership and governance of the school by ensuring that:
 - leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are regular, rigorous and systematic and take full account of the points for improvement raised in this inspection

- judgments about teaching and teachers' progress up the pay scales are expressly linked to how well teachers are contributing to school improvement
- teachers, governors and the local authority cooperate and work effectively to identify successful ways of improving teaching and to ensure that groups of pupils making insufficient progress are identified quickly
- by the end of the Summer Term 2013, the governing body ensures that the school's administration systems comply fully with current requirements for safeguarding
- the governing body develops fully effective systems for holding the school to account for the quality of teaching and the progress that all pupils make
- governors make regular checks on the use and impact of the pupil premium on pupils' progress
- an external review of governance is undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3–4 February 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, the Diocesan Director of Education, representatives of the local authority and a large group of parents and carers. The inspector visited all classes to observe teaching and learning and evaluated a sample of pupils' work. The inspector also considered the content of correspondence received from a number of parents and carers.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been no significant contextual changes.

Achievement of pupils at the school

At the end of Year 6 in 2013, overall standards in reading, writing and mathematics were in line with those expected nationally. Most pupils made the expected progress nationally given their starting points in reading and writing, but few did better than this. In mathematics, not enough pupils made the progress expected nationally and none made better than expected progress.

The progress pupils made in lessons during the monitoring visit was variable. The work in pupils' books confirms that pupils are not making sufficient progress over time to achieve as well as they should. Because of previous inadequate provision, some pupils are lacking some basic literacy and numeracy skills, such as correct letter formation, rapid recall of number facts and performing simple mathematical calculations. The more-able pupils do not make sufficient progress because teachers' do not set high enough expectations for them. Pupils who find learning difficult, or who have special educational needs, receive well-organised and sensitive support which helps them to gain confidence and make better progress than other pupils.

Throughout the school there is an increased focus on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, this is improving children's early reading and writing skills. In summer 2013, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving at the expected level in the phonics screening check was average. At Key Stage 2, pupils' writing books show that their spelling skills are improving and pupils were observed using appropriate strategies to decode letters in order to read challenging words.

The quality of teaching

Lesson observations during this inspection indicate that there have been some improvements in the quality of teaching. This is because teachers have been open

to, and willing to change their practice as a result of professional development opportunities provided by local authority consultants and advisers. However, these improvements have had insufficient impact in securing more rapid progress for all pupils. The quality of teaching remains too variable with some teaching being inadequate.

A revised format for planning lessons highlights the attainment levels for different ability groups and is helping most teachers to match the work they give to pupils more carefully to their abilities. However, sometimes teachers' planning takes too little account of pupils' prior learning and focuses too much on the tasks the pupils are to complete without connecting these closely enough to what they will learn. Consequently, even though pupils complete activities, they do not make the progress they could and often lose interest. Training which has been provided to teachers about questioning techniques is not applied well in all lessons. Questions are sometimes too superficial and do not stretch the more-able pupils because they are all pitched at the same level.

When teaching and learning are better, expectations are generally higher and pupils show that they are capable of rising to the challenge. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to explain their answers and frequently challenge their thinking through effective questioning. Staff are working hard to create inspiring learning environments. Teachers are developing effective working walls in all classrooms through the use of word banks, prompts and ideas. Literacy and numeracy targets are clearly displayed and pupils know the targets they are working towards.

The deployment of teaching assistants is a strength and they take an active role in promoting learning in all classrooms. They use their initiative to move around the classroom and support pupils when they see a pupil is finding learning difficult.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school during the monitoring inspection was well ordered. Pupils are polite and friendly. When lessons are not planned well enough to meet the needs of pupils, they quickly go off task and the pace of learning slows. Where the teaching is good, pupils are engaged and enthusiastic learners who are developing confidence in themselves and are ambitious to succeed.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The local authority has supported senior leaders in introducing the systems required to raise standards. Targets have been set for all pupils based on nationally expected rates of progress and these are suitably challenging. Systems for tracking pupils' progress towards these targets have been established with regular times for assessment during the year. This assessment information is beginning to be used by senior leaders to set targets for teachers and ensure that their pay progression and promotion are clearly linked to performance.

Nonetheless, there is insufficient urgency and drive from the headteacher in tackling the areas for improvement which relate to pupils' achievement or the quality of teaching. She has not been robust enough in checking whether actions which have been agreed are happening in all classes. The systems introduced to raise standards remain at an early stage of implementation. Consequently, the school is not improving quickly enough. The school is very heavily dependent on external support in almost all aspects of its work.

Middle leaders are gaining confidence in their roles and are beginning to play a part in the monitoring process. For example, the special educational needs co-ordinator can identify accurately the strengths and weaknesses of intervention programmes and can demonstrate the impact her monitoring has had in bringing about improvements.

Governors are working diligently to address the recommendations made following the external review of governance. An improvement plan has been devised which identifies key priorities and actions appropriately, including a more comprehensive programme of visits to observe the school's work. The governing body is increasing its knowledge about the work of the school and is swiftly developing a better understanding of the impact of actions taken by the school.

Parents raised concerns about the progress their children are making, the information they receive, the tone of letters, and the responses of the school's leadership and management to their concerns. The acrimonious relationship between the headteacher and a significant number of parents does not serve the best interests of pupils. A growing number of pupils are leaving the school. Conversely, many parents spoke about the caring attitude of all the staff.

Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and meet current requirements.

External support

The local authority and diocese are providing extensive support to the school and have well-considered plans for this to continue as required. Senior advisers are providing considerable support to senior leaders through their regular visits and termly reviews of progress. Consultants are providing a good range of training and support for all staff. This external support has been the key factor in enabling the school to improve the quality of teaching since the previous monitoring inspection. However, the impact of this intense support in other areas has been variable because the headteacher lacks the capacity to set direction decisively, implement strategies consistently and secure the confidence of all parents and staff.