

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

**T** 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 311 5359  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

14 March 2014

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 to your school on 12 and 13 March 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 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 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 Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills for Kent and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

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 third monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 March 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, a governor and the local authority school improvement adviser. Teaching and learning were observed in every class with either the executive headteacher or the head of school. A sample of pupils' books were looked at. 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 a number of staff changes since the last monitoring inspection in December. The Reception teacher has left. The class is taught by a temporary teacher who is supported for one day each week by an experienced Early Years Foundation Stage teacher from another school. Two teachers are on sick leave and the classes are currently being taught by temporary staff. Another teacher is leaving at the end of the term. One of the seconded teachers very recently returned to the former federated school and the other will be doing so by the end of the academic year. The recruitment of permanent staff is under way. The Interim Improvement Board (IIB) continues to govern the school. It will remain in place until the school converts to an academy as part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership which is expected to take place by 1 September 2014. Arrangements are being made to establish a full governing body.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

The school's detailed records show that pupils are beginning to make more progress and an increasing proportion are working closer to the standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are expected for their age. Some pupils are catching up on previous lost ground and gaps are beginning to close. The rate of improvement is not consistent in all classes or subjects because the quality of teaching and learning is still too variable. Too many of the most-able pupils and those whose previous attainment was low are not making enough progress because their work is not pitched at the right level.

Early reading and writing skills are being developed systematically. More pupils in Year 2 are reading at the levels expected for their age and children in the Reception class confidently use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to attempt to read and spell unfamiliar words.

Pupils' books show that they are completing more work than previously and their handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation are improving, but this is not the case in all classes or subjects.

With help from local authority advisers, leaders regularly check that teachers' judgements about standards attained and the progress that each pupil in the class makes are accurate. Support for teachers is making a difference and their judgements are more reliable, although not in all classes. Leaders know which teachers need more help because their judgements do not match the learning that leaders see in lessons and pupils' books.

The progress that pupils make in lessons is beginning to improve, particularly in Reception and Year 6 where teaching is strongest. However, consistently good learning is not sufficiently established across the school to help all pupils make up for previous underachievement.

### **The quality of teaching**

Although the quality of teaching is improving, there is not enough permanent, good teaching to make sure that pupils learn consistently well in all classes. The school's own targets for improving teaching have been missed. Teachers have been given carefully targeted, intensive one-to-one support from the local authority adviser and senior leaders. This has helped some staff to improve their classroom practice. They have also benefited from seeing outstanding teaching in other schools. Robust action has been taken to tackle underperformance but inadequate teaching, which hinders learning and progress, remains in some year groups.

Pupils learn well when work is pitched at the right level for them. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils of different abilities made rapid gains in their understanding of coordinates because purposeful activities built their skills and understanding step-by-step in a logical sequence. Pupils understood what they needed to do next and moved themselves on as soon as they were ready, accurately completing a good amount of work in the time available. They were motivated, particularly the most-able pupils, by the challenge of completing progressively more demanding tasks so remained focused throughout the lesson. Errors and misconceptions were spotted and corrected quickly. The teacher constantly checked pupils' understanding by asking probing questions, worked with pupils when necessary to get them back on the right track and checked that they remained so. Pupils confidently found solutions to any difficulties for themselves using relevant resources which were readily available to help them.

The quality of teaching in the Reception class has improved significantly since the last monitoring inspection. Children enjoy their learning and develop a good range of skills because carefully planned activities are interesting, adults ask timely questions and keep careful checks on how well all children are involved and make choices. Children count confidently, readily have a go at writing and eagerly read books. They

socialise well, their language skills are improving, they sustain high levels of concentration for their age and have a curiosity to find out more.

By contrast to this effective teaching and learning, other pupils gained little understanding of fractions in another mathematics lesson. Pupils were confused by inappropriate activities that did not build on what they knew and needed to learn next. The apparatus provided was unhelpful and slowed their progress. For example, pupils had to select 76 counters and put them into two piles to find a half, but they did not understand why this might help and there was no discussion about whether this was an efficient method to use. A lack of understanding about how to teach fractions successfully meant that pupils were not given clear guidance and taught key points necessary to their understanding. Errors and misconceptions went unchecked by the adults.

Teachers mark pupils' work in line with the school's guidelines and are increasingly including comments to help pupils improve. In some of the books seen, pupils have responded to these comments. Some temporary teachers are not following the school's approach or marking the work, and this is unacceptable.

To build on the improvements that have been made and benefit fully from the training and support provided, the school needs permanent, high-quality teaching in every class. Appropriate arrangements to recruit new permanent teachers are in place.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The executive headteacher has established a clear understanding of what is expected and given the school a well-defined structure for improving teaching and learning. Information about the progress that individual and groups of pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics in different classes is analysed thoroughly and shared.

The quality of teaching and learning is checked regularly and information from lesson observations, data about pupils' progress and work seen in books are considered carefully to make sure there is an accurate understanding of what is working well and where more needs to be done. Information is used to challenge underperformance and set targets for teachers, balanced with tailored support to help them improve. Actions have made a notable difference to the quality of teaching and learning in the Reception class.

By working alongside the executive headteacher, the head of school has become more skilful at monitoring teaching and learning, giving candid feedback to teachers on their strengths and weaknesses and helping them to improve. The English and mathematics subject leaders are increasingly involved in checking teaching and learning in their subjects across the school. The ability of the mathematics leader to support the school's improvement journey in particular is growing.

The school's raising attainment plan has been updated. It includes specific targets and clear milestones to help governors and senior leaders measure whether sufficient progress is being made towards raising standards and improving the quality of teaching quickly enough to make up for the ground lost before the arrival of the executive headteacher.

Current leaders and governors know that previous spending decisions on how additional funding was used to help pupils make better progress were not effective. They have made sure that any funding left from the current year is being used where pupils need it most. Decisions about next year's additional funding are already being planned based on what leaders know works best.

Governors are skilled and knowledgeable and provide leaders with the right balance of challenge and support to improve. They visit regularly and understand the detailed information they are given about the school's performance. Consequently, they know that more needs to be done to build on the improvements that have been made since the last monitoring inspection.

### **External support**

Senior leaders, governors, the local authority and diocese are working together to make sure the school continues to move forward. Appropriately focused support from local authority advisers and the expertise in other schools is helping to develop subject leadership, increase the accuracy of the school's data about pupils' progress and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Greater impact has been limited by staff absences. The local authority and diocese are rightly helping the executive headteacher to stabilise staffing quickly and address concerns expressed by some parents and carers.

Links with the Kent Catholic Schools Partnership are being established appropriately to share information and plan the transition to an academy.