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14 March 2014

Mr M Smith
The Headteacher
St John the Evangelist Church of England Primary School
Bluebell Way
Carterton
OX18 1JF

Dear Mr Smith

Special measures monitoring inspection of St John the Evangelist CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Farr, Her Majesty's Inspector, and David Shears, Additional Inspector, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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.

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 Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, so none is inadequate and much more is good by:
 - giving teachers support so that they can accurately mark pupils' work and tell pupils precisely how they can improve
 - making sure that teachers use what they already know about pupils to match activities to pupils' abilities
 - ensuring that teachers tell pupils clearly what they will be learning in each lesson
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn actively in lessons.
- Improve rates of progress in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - plan how pupils will make progress in lessons, throughout the year and from year to year
 - give more difficult work to the more able pupils.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that teachers in Years 5 and 6 consistently apply what is written in the behaviour policy.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by providing appropriate training so that leaders and managers:
 - understand and analyse information about pupils' achievement, especially for different groups, and use this to identify areas for improvement
 - regularly review the impact of actions taken
 - check on the quality of teaching, and hold teachers to account for the progress that pupils make
 - make sure the management of teachers' performance is used so that salary increases are closely linked to good, and improving teaching.
- Make sure that governors hold senior leaders and managers more robustly to account by:
 - having accurate information about pupils' achievement
 - asking demanding questions about the impact of actions taken by leaders and managers.

Priority for further improvement following the third monitoring inspection

- Increase rates of pupils' progress and raise levels of attainment for all pupils across the school in reading, phonics and writing, by the end of the summer term 2014.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with staff, pupils, the Deputy Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

One teacher left the school in February at half term. At present, the special educational needs coordinator is teaching the class for four days per week. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are sharing the teaching of the class for the fifth day.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is beginning to show signs of improvement, but continues to be variable across the school. With the exception of Year 3, boys' attainment is below the girls' in reading and writing in all year groups. In Year 3, Year 4 and Year 6, boys' attainment in mathematics is above the girls'. Pupils' progress, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, continues to improve, but remains inconsistent. In most year groups, pupils make reasonable progress, with some making good progress. Overall rates of progress in Year 6 have increased. The school's own information indicates that in Year 6, from the start of the academic year, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good. However, previous underachievement means that this group of pupils needs to continue to make rapid progress to ensure their attainment is at least in line with the national average by the end of the year. There are signs of the gaps narrowing between pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and pupils who have a parent working in the armed forces) and other pupils, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6. The key to the school being removed from special measures is to ensure at all pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.

Currently, achievement for pupils in Year 1 in phonics (the sounds letters make) is broadly in line with the expectations for their age at this stage in the year. At present, fewer than half of the pupils in Year 2 are at the expected standard for their age. Some pupils in Year 3, who did not reach the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 2 in 2013, are still achieving below the expected standard. Assessment systems are more established, this includes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Senior leaders are checking the accuracy of assessments and some inaccuracies have been found. Further work is being carried out to ensure all assessments of pupils' achievements are validated. External checking of the initial assessment of children in the Reception classes shows that the school's judgements are accurate. Overall, the skills and abilities of children in the Early Years Foundation

Stage are below those expected for their age, particularly in their mathematical development.

Pupils now have a good understanding of the levels they have achieved. In writing and mathematics, they know their targets and also what they need to do to achieve the next level of attainment. However, in reading, pupils are unclear about what they need to do to reach a higher level.

The quality of teaching

Although the quality of teaching is improving, evidence in pupils' work and in teachers' assessments of pupils' learning shows that the quality of teaching needs to be much stronger in order to enable pupils to make consistently good progress. Teachers know the levels of ability of all their pupils and many teachers plan appropriate activities which engage pupils effectively in learning and enable them to make progress in lessons. However, in some instances, planned activities are not sharply focused on moving pupils' learning on rapidly. There is insufficient challenge for many groups of pupils, which limits their progress.

The quality of marking has improved and is becoming more consistent in writing and mathematics. The use of colours to highlight what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve their work further is more consistently evident. However, teachers do not always make it clear to pupils what they have done well. There is an expectation that pupils will respond more regularly to teachers' marking comments, but because their responses are not followed up thoroughly enough, some responses are not leading pupils to improve their learning. Pupils' work in other subjects is not marked in sufficient depth and some work is left unmarked for long periods of time.

Teachers are ensuring pupils have many opportunities to be actively engaged in learning tasks. Many use discussions between pupils to strengthen their understanding. On-going assessments of pupils' learning in lessons are beginning to develop. Increasingly, teachers are using their questioning skills to check on pupils' learning. However, many teachers are not using the responses from pupils to interrogate their understanding or to challenge their thinking further. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is more to be done to ensure that the assessments of children's day-to-day learning are leading to planned opportunities to develop children's next steps in their learning and development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all pupils have positive attitudes to learning; they concentrate well in lessons and enjoy good relationships with adults and other pupils. In a few lessons, where the planned activities were not sufficiently engaging or well matched to pupils' learning abilities, some pupils displayed off-task behaviour, which had a negative impact on their progress.

Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that any issues that arise will be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Their enjoyment of school is evident in the improvements in attendance rates. Since the start of this academic year, attendance is much higher than at the same time the previous year. This makes a positive contribution to the opportunities pupils have to learn and make good progress.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The newly-appointed headteacher has quickly established good relationships with staff, parents and pupils. A revised and well-focused raising achievement plan is in place. This document is vital to drive forward the planned improvements identified in the last inspection report. Governors have a clear understanding of their monitoring responsibilities and are stepping up the opportunities they have to see for themselves the work that is being done to improve rates of pupils' progress.

Training has taken place for phase leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and governors to increase their understanding of the information the school gathers on the attainment and progress of pupils. The school now has detailed information about the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils across the school. Teachers are taking more responsibility for identifying pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Together with the special educational needs coordinator and other senior leaders, planned interventions and additional learning opportunities have been put in place to enable pupils to catch up. These are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Senior leaders now need to ensure the information they gather on the achievement of pupils is carefully analysed in order to evaluate the impact of the actions they are taking to improve the school.

The headteacher has carried out a number of observations of teaching since his arrival in January. Although at an early stage, weaknesses identified during lesson observations are being followed up to check that teachers are addressing them. The headteacher is supporting the development of the skills of other senior leaders by providing opportunities for inexperienced leaders to observe lessons alongside him in order to ensure judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate. Additional evidence is beginning to be collated to provide a clearer picture of the quality of teaching over time. It is important that the judgements on the quality of teaching take into account not only the quality of learning in lessons but also the progress seen across a range of subjects in pupils' work. In addition, the evidence the school gathers on the quality of planning, particularly the planning for the differing learning needs of all groups of pupils and the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work, should be brought to bear when making judgements on the quality of teaching.

The procedures for checking on the performance of teachers are in place. Objectives have been agreed. The headteacher needs to ensure the governing body is kept fully informed about the quality of teaching to enable effective teachers, whose pupils have made good progress, are rewarded for their performance when their performance is reviewed at the end of the appraisal cycle. In addition, senior leaders

with specific responsibilities for driving improvement need to be held accountable for the impact of their work on raising standards and achievement for all pupils.

External support

The school continues to rely on the support of the local authority to increase the effectiveness of subject leaders and other middle leaders. The Early Years Foundation Stage consultants and the literacy and numeracy consultants have visited the school regularly to develop teachers' skills in assessing pupils' learning. The support from the inclusion consultant is having a positive impact on the work of the special educational needs coordinator. Close tracking of the progress of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs has enabled appropriate support to be put in place. The local authority continues to hold regular meetings with governors and senior leaders to check on the school's progress.