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20 March 2014

Mrs Elizabeth Maxted
Headteacher
St Saviour's Church of England Primary School
Herne Hill Road
London
SE24 0AY

Dear Mrs Maxted

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Saviour's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Gaynor Roberts, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 Director of Children's Services for Lambeth and the Diocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely
Adam Higgins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - establishing effective systems for rigorously checking how well the school is doing, which include the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress
 - ensuring that the outcomes of these checks are analysed, and strengths and areas for improvement identified and acted upon through incisive improvement planning
 - using pupil achievement information more effectively to track and analyse the progress of the different groups of pupils, particularly boys
 - assessing the impact of the various types of support given to pupils
 - providing teachers with clear steps for developing their skills and checking that they are followed up to make sure they work
 - strengthening the contribution of subject leaders to improving teaching and learning.

- Develop the skills of the governing body, especially in understanding information about pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching, so that it can hold school leaders more effectively to account for the impact of their work. An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - all teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - activities are carefully matched to pupils' individual needs so that they are always challenging and involve pupils actively in learning
 - all staff ask pupils challenging and probing questions
 - all staff use teaching assistants fully to support pupils' learning.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, executive headteacher, senior leaders, three members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, groups of pupils and staff. In addition, inspectors had informal conversations with pupils in classes and around the school.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the governing body has appointed two new associate members.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Lesson observations, evidence in pupils' books and school tracking data show that there is still significant variability in the progress made by pupils. It is better in reading and mathematics but remains consistently lower in writing. Historically, pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium have achieved significantly less well than their peers. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that although the gap is beginning to close, it is not closing quickly enough.

Leaders have ensured that processes for tracking pupils' attainment are more frequent and rigorous than previously. Teachers are expected to use the information about how well pupils are doing to plan carefully for the specific needs of groups of pupils. Leaders have ensured that parents and carers are more informed about how well their children are doing at school and have recently sent home mid-year progress updates. Older pupils know the levels at which they are working in English and mathematics and have high aspirations for their end of year targets. Professional training has been the way in which leaders are ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to assess the standard of pupils' work accurately. Teachers from this school have joined with those from other local schools to look at the quality of pupils' work. They have been able to learn from and see how well other pupils beyond St Saviour's achieve. This is raising their expectations of what pupils at St Saviour's can do.

Teachers have been made more accountable for the progress that their pupils make. The headteacher meets regularly with class teachers at pupils' progress meetings, to identify those pupils not doing as well as they should. They agree the most appropriate strategies to use, to ensure that pupils do better. These strategies are subsequently reviewed every six weeks, to evaluate their effectiveness.

The quality of teaching

In some classrooms, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are high and consequently, they make better progress. These teachers use carefully planned activities that match pupils' abilities and which are not too easy or too hard. In the best lessons, time is used effectively and is not wasted on trivial matters; lessons begin promptly and get off to a brisk start. However, pupils told inspectors that the work could be even more challenging and that they believe that they could work even harder. They commented that the homework given in some year groups was particularly easy.

Pupils' books show that in most classes they receive helpful feedback about how well they have done and what they need to do in order to improve further. Opportunities for pupils to respond to marking and evaluate their own work have been introduced recently. Pupils told inspectors that this is helping them to get better at their work. The quality of this feedback is inconsistent. Some pupils receive good advice about how to improve their work and others are not given any. Additionally, some pupils' books have work that remains unmarked. Not all teachers are consistently applying the recently introduced marking code.

Some teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning but this is not consistent. Teaching assistants have been trained to ensure that they have a better understanding of their role in improving learning. A few, however, do not yet demonstrate that they understand how to do this, and fall back on ineffective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour or, worse, slow the pace of learning. This is not a good use of their time or of this costly resource.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour policy has recently been reviewed and is being applied consistently in all classrooms. Pupils are aware of these changes and told inspectors that behaviour has improved since the headteacher came to the school.

Pupils' behaviour in the playground is mostly good. They are kept safe; however, a few 'nooks and crannies' allow pupils to go unobserved by adults for short periods of time. Similarly, pupils' behaviour around the school is also mostly good. They are polite, kind and welcoming to visitors and to each other. The majority of pupils move responsibly from classrooms to music lessons and, in the main, they walk along corridors without requiring additional supervision. A few younger pupils do not behave as well in lessons as they could. When the learning does not engage them, they become distracted and disturb others from their learning. On these occasions, the teacher's expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough and this disruption is allowed to continue.

Regular daily attendance at school is improving and patterns of attendance are monitored closely. The headteacher ensures that parents and carers are aware of their responsibility to help their children attend school regularly. When a pupil's attendance begins to decline, the headteacher contacts their parents and carers to discuss the reasons and to plan supportive strategies to halt any further decline. Fixed penalty notices are issued as a deterrent for persistently high levels of absence.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning because they regularly devote time to looking at pupils' work in their books, watching learning in classrooms and scrutinising information about pupils' progress in different subjects. They are highly aspirational and have a determined focus on improving teaching and learning. Leaders are aware that there is variation across the school. A number of carefully chosen new initiatives have been introduced to improve teaching and learning. As yet these are not consistently seen in all classrooms.

The headteacher is devoting time and effort to working with and engaging parents and carers. The weekly school newsletter is an effective tool for keeping parents and carers informed about how quickly the school is improving. Leaders are aware that the capacity of some middle leaders to move the school forward is restricted by their lack of experience and expertise. They are making plans to develop middle leadership with support from the local authority and the federation. Improving behaviour, attendance and the quality of marking are a measure of leaders' success at addressing some key areas.

The governing body has an improved understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and the achievement of pupils because it receives regular updates on these key areas from senior leaders. Governors ask questions about the information that they receive and visit the school to check for themselves that the information is accurate. The governing body commissioned an external review of its work. The resulting action plan is, however, a distraction and has started to divert governors from their core business of holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching and learning. While governors are individually skilled and committed to their roles, they have begun to undertake actions that are not immediate priorities for the school if it is to improve quickly. If this goes unchecked, the actions of the governing body will distract senior leaders from their focus on the immediate school improvement priorities and risk lengthening the timescale for the removal of special measures.

External support

There has been a joined-up approach to the support provided to the school since the last monitoring inspection. Individually, each of the partner organisations has provided appropriate support, which has been carefully targeted to meet specific school priorities.

A local authority officer is linked to the school. His frequent visits ensure that leaders are on track to achieve actions identified in the school improvement plan. Training has helped teachers to gain a better understanding of how to deliver effective learning in classrooms and how to teach early reading skills. Some teaching assistants have been identified to receive additional support to better deliver early reading skills to pupils. Regular monitoring at a senior level within the local authority takes place at the 'Action Group' meetings. The minutes of the meetings show that challenging questions are asked of school leaders about the quality of teaching and how well pupils are doing.

Southwark Diocesan Board of Education has provided additional challenge for school leaders from an advisor. It is supporting the school financially with additional funds to develop the outside learning area for Reception children. School leaders have rightly identified this as a priority.

The Loughborough Federation of Schools has provided leading teachers from Kings Avenue Primary School to work with teachers from the school to support improvements in the quality of teaching. Evidence from observations of teaching during the inspection shows that this work has started to have an impact.

The three partners have worked together with school leaders to review the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They observed teaching and learning in the classroom, scrutinised pupils' books, spoke to pupils about their learning and gathered the views of parents and carers. This helpful approach led to a comprehensive report that identified the improvements that were seen but also specifically identified the areas that still require addressing.