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26 March 2014

Mrs J Lees
Executive Headteacher
St Matthew's High Brooms Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Powder Mill Lane
High Brooms
Tunbridge Wells
TN4 9DY

Dear Mrs Lees

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Matthew's High Brooms
Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspector to your school on 24 and 25 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 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures. The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher in Key Stage 2 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 Kent and the Diocese of Rochester.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the standards of teaching to be good or better by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills in all lessons
 - eliminating inconsistencies in the way teachers assess pupils work and how they mark it
 - training teaching assistants so they are better able to support pupils
 - ensuring that teachers accurately match the tasks they provide to the abilities of the pupils to ensure all are fully engaged, interested and challenged.
- Ensure that all pupils make at least expected progress, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that both teachers and teaching assistants have a thorough subject knowledge of mathematics
 - providing opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge to solve real-life problems
 - ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those supported by pupil premium funding do at least as well as similar pupils nationally and close the gap with other groups, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils build on their writing skills as they move through the school and providing them with opportunities to practise and develop these skills in a range of subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of the newly appointed Key Stage and subject leaders so they are better able to monitor teaching and progress within their areas of responsibility
 - having a clear structure for the teaching of mathematics across the whole school to ensure that the needs of all learners are being met
 - ensuring that all pupils have a wide range of experiences and are taught in ways that suit their different ways of learning
 - embedding the recently introduced performance management arrangements for all staff.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, the governing body, a representative from the local authority, groups of teachers, a group of parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed 16 lessons and made short visits to four other lessons. Inspectors analysed pupils' work and teachers' marking.

Context

The executive headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher with effect from September 2014. One of the part-time heads of school, who was appointed on a temporary basis, has left and been replaced by another part-time interim head of school, until July 2014. One teacher has left and has been replaced on a temporary basis by an experienced teacher on secondment from Langton Green Primary School. Two teaching assistants have left and two have started. The new co-ordinator for special educational needs took over this role in January 2014. The school has a new bursar.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement is improving rapidly overall because the progress of the majority of pupils has accelerated, particularly since September 2013. The gaps between the achievement of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils have closed significantly. Younger pupils' achievement in phonics (the sounds that letters make) is rising because the teaching of early reading skills has improved. The most able pupils in Years 2 and 6 are on track to reach high standards.

Despite this positive picture overall, inconsistencies remain. While pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is set to rise at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014, it is currently lower in reading because pupils have not made enough progress since the beginning of the key stage. Year 6 pupils have made good progress in reading and writing during Key Stage 2, but their progress has been slower in mathematics. Pupils' achievement in mathematics in Year 5 and in writing in Year 4 is lower than it is in other subjects. Not all disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are yet making enough progress and a minority are underachieving. However, these issues have been identified by senior leaders and they are already taking action to address them.

The quality of teaching

Teachers are working extremely hard to improve. As a result, more teaching is now good or better and inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Teachers now expect

pupils to be more productive during lessons. Pupils are increasingly set tasks that are hard enough because teachers are beginning to use more detailed and accurate information about pupils' achievement to plan lessons. Pupils are now given far more opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Teachers' questioning has, in general, improved. They regularly check pupils' progress during lessons, giving pupils useful feedback and extra help when necessary. Pupils have a better understanding about what they need to do in order to be successful in lessons. During the inspection, the inspectors met with parents who said that they would like to have a clearer understanding about teachers' higher expectations of pupils' work in order to support their children more effectively at home.

However, teachers are not setting work at the right level in order for all pupils to achieve well. Most importantly, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are sometimes given work that is too easy. Teaching assistants' support for these pupils is too variable in its impact on their learning, at times slowing down their progress. The level of challenge for more able pupils also varies too much because the tasks they are given and the questions they are asked do not always stretch them sufficiently. While teachers' marking is improving, pupils are not always given enough opportunities and sufficient time to make improvements, especially in mathematics.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, although there are occasions when some pupils, particularly younger ones, lose focus and concentration. When this happens it is not always dealt with effectively by teachers and other adults. Attendance is rising and is now average because of the effective strategies put in place by senior leaders, for example the work of the recently appointed family liaison officer. While the new behaviour policy is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, the pupils and the parents spoken to during the inspection feel that it is not yet consistently or fairly applied. Pupils say they feel safe at school, but some pupils move around the school too quickly and they are not always asked to slow down and walk sensibly. Most pupils play happily together and behaviour is good in the dining hall at lunchtime. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils is not yet good enough, however, and fixed-term exclusions have risen. Racial incidents are rare, but they are inconsistently recorded and it is not always clear how such incidents have been dealt with or whether actions have been effective.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher and the two part-time heads of school provide strong leadership. They continue to take the right actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement, leading to the school's good rate of improvement in these areas. Teachers are held robustly to account for pupils' achievement and senior leaders' checks on teachers' performance are regular and accurate. Teachers and additional

adults receive regular training, and the partnership with Langton Green Primary School has been used well to improve their practice. Pupils' achievement is now tracked in much more detail and senior leaders are rightly using this information to drive up standards. Leaders ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. However, the parents spoken to during the inspection felt that senior leaders were not yet visible or accessible enough.

Senior leaders have effectively developed the subject and key stage leaders, who have begun to have more of a tangible impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The impact of these leaders needs to continue to increase. For example, there is not yet a sufficient balance between solving problems and calculation in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1. In addition, leaders are not yet having doing enough to improve pupils' behaviour or to systematically analyse incidents of poor behaviour in order to target their actions.

The new co-ordinator for special educational needs has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. She is taking effective action, but because this is relatively recent it has yet to have a substantial impact on the achievement of these pupils.

The governing body is now more streamlined, efficient and better organised. Governors evaluate the school's progress in detail and have continued their frequent visits to the school to collect their own evidence of improvements. Training, for example in analysing information about pupils' achievement, and an increasingly forensic view of the school mean that governors now challenge school leaders regularly and effectively. The financial management of the school has improved. Governors have not made a sufficient contribution to the performance management of the executive headteacher. While governors have updated parents about the school's progress via the school's website, they have yet to hold a meeting for parents to discuss this.

External support

The local authority rightly believes that strong senior leadership and the increasingly effective impact of other leaders mean that the school is rapidly becoming self-improving. The local authority monitors the school's progress every six weeks, although evaluations are too often based on information provided by the school rather than evidence collected by officers. The local authority has also provided very effective financial advice, useful training for governors and valuable assistance for the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher. An adviser has visited the school to review provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage which led to clear and appropriate recommendations for action. Leaders and teachers have made good use of the continuing partnership with Langton Green Primary School.