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Mr J Reynard
Executive Headteacher
Annecy Catholic Primary School
Sutton Avenue
Seaford
East Sussex
BN25 4LF

Dear Mr Reynard

Special measures monitoring inspection of Annecy Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Robin Gaff, additional inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 May 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 October 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's development plan is now fit for purpose
- the school may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection after consultation with me and with my approval, and subject to mentoring and support procedures from Seaford Primary School being arranged to my satisfaction.

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 East Sussex and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that it is at least good in order to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide pupils of different abilities with suitable work which builds systematically and effectively on their understanding of how to use and apply basic mathematical skills
 - work is planned which is sufficiently challenging for all pupils and children in Reception, especially the most able
 - pupils with low prior attainment are provided with suitable activities to help them improve their mathematical skills.
- Make sure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress by improving the quality of teaching, particularly at Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of the information gained about pupils' understanding during lessons to reshape and extend pupils' learning
 - the pace of learning in lessons keeps pupils interested and engaged
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can learn and of their behaviour in lessons
 - pupils supported through the pupil premium are given the support and challenge to enable them to achieve well and to close the gaps with their peers
 - teachers regularly show pupils how to tackle tasks successfully.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, at all levels by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders work together more cohesively as a team so that there is a strongly shared vision to drive and increase the pace of school improvement
 - swift and effective action is taken to eliminate inconsistencies in the information used by the school to check pupils' progress and to raise pupils' achievement
 - information about pupils' achievement is analysed more rigorously to check the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly those supported by the pupil premium
 - the governing body's understanding of how well pupils are doing and how well funding is being used is improved, so that they have a clear picture of where there are weaknesses in teaching, and are able to provide effective challenge to the school so that it improves. An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 May 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, a representative from the local authority, and a representative from the diocese. Nine lessons were observed, involving all classes in the school, four jointly with the executive headteacher. There were four shorter visits to lessons.

Context

The headteacher has been absent from the school due to illness for the last three months. In her absence, an executive headteacher, who is the headteacher of Seaford Primary School, is directing and overseeing improvements in the school and is on site for half of the week.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement in different classes and across subjects is very uneven, because the quality of their learning in previous years has been too variable. An associated and serious problem is that trends in progress are difficult to gauge from the school's records because teachers' assessments have been unreliable for some time. The school has responded appropriately by instituting non-statutory National Curriculum tests for all pupils, to have a baseline of attainment from which to gauge progress. There are indications, despite these complications, that pupils are beginning to make better progress. More is being asked of them now, both in terms of the quality and the quantity of their work in lessons. There is an increased sense of intellectual liveliness and engagement with the work in many classes, and pupils are responding well to many teachers' higher expectations. For example, in one mathematics lesson seen on factors, some very-able pupils were puzzling through some quite complex word problems that involved them using their understanding of common factors in an imaginative way; others were identifying all of the factors of double digit numbers reliably and systematically, and were able to discuss their work confidently with inspectors.

These test outcomes, and pupils' current work, indicate that pupils currently in Year 6 are expected to demonstrate disappointing progress from Key Stage 1, despite the better teaching they have had this year. Children's current progress in Reception, and pupils' progress in Years 1 to 5, is showing signs of improvement, but it is early days and gains are patchy across year groups. Reading is developing more securely across the school now as a result of much better guided reading lessons, and other strategies across all subjects to improve literacy skills, but writing is still relatively weak in Years 2 and 3. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics is

generally stronger but remains unsatisfactory in Year 3. The progress made by pupils eligible for the pupil premium is difficult to gauge because of the reasons given above, but best estimates indicate a similarly uneven picture across subject areas and classes. Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are making better progress now because the new inclusion manager has put in place more robust systems to identify and address individual pupils' needs. A newly instituted regular weekly meeting between the inclusion manager and the executive headteacher looks at these needs in context and ensures that interventions are being successful.

The quality of teaching

Some consistent strengths in teaching are beginning to emerge because staff are starting to share good practice, and discuss teaching and learning strategies in meetings and training sessions, and informally in the staffroom. Expectations of teachers have been raised and, as a consequence, many are raising their sights and showing a genuine desire to improve the depth and breadth of their skills. Good work has begun to ensure the validity and reliability of teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements in all year groups.

The quality of teachers' marking is now consistently at least satisfactory and some is good. The best gives high-quality feedback about specific aspects of pupils' work and invites them to continue the dialogue it opens up. Pupils often respond well to this; many say that they value it.

While some teachers can use questioning in a lively and challenging manner, too few lessons involve teachers acquiring a comprehensive grasp of how pupils are thinking about a topic, and the gains in their knowledge and understanding at various points in the lesson. In such cases, this limits the impact of the teacher's input, and disguises the need for more varied challenges of different groups, and different ways of working, to be required of the more-able pupils and those that struggle.

Pupils feel that teaching is changing, and say it is becoming more practical and involving. They enjoy the higher expectations that many teachers now have of them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is improving because they are beginning to respond positively to what they feel to be a fairer and more motivating new rewards and recognition scheme. In classes, there is usually a palpable sense of pupils wanting to please and do well, and therefore good-quality relationships on which to build. Even when work is too easy, and teachers are not monitoring pupils closely and giving them challenge and support in lessons often enough, pupils do not disrupt the learning of others, but simply disengage and chat amicably. In some lessons, the pace has picked up noticeably over the last few weeks and pupils are obviously more interested, and

willing to think more closely and carefully about how to improve their work, demonstrating that better teaching can directly support better attitudes to learning in the school.

On the playground, pupils play well together, and there were examples seen of them caring for each other. Sometimes, behaviour at lunchtimes gets a little too lively, but this is due to pupils becoming overexcited rather than deliberately misbehaving. On one occasion during the inspection, an older boy was seen to run into a younger pupil accidentally; he immediately apologised, helped him up and tried to care for him. Some lunchtime playground supervisors are not sufficiently vigilant and skilled to manage play confidently and closely enough at such times.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new executive headteacher has already made a very positive impact on the school. He is clear about the standards he expects and has agreed with staff a number of 'non-negotiable' behaviours. He is leading with a quiet confidence which is underpinned by a clear commitment to seeing pupils' achievement improve, and for them to enjoy the challenges and stimulation that good teaching can offer, at the same time supporting the school's Catholic ethos. He already commands the respect of staff, pupils, governors, and parents and carers.

A significant factor in the improvements evident since his arrival is the newfound confidence and enthusiasm of other senior and middle leaders. Their talents are now being recognised and their ideas shown value. Novel approaches are now encouraged, providing they can be seen to be contributing to better rates of progress by pupils in lessons. Teachers with responsibility for subjects are now ready to be held to account for standards and are encouraged to actively support other staff to develop their teaching skills by working alongside them in lessons, modelling good practice. This is beginning to support better teaching.

Senior staff monitor lessons regularly and check that training is being put into practice. The executive headteacher and other staff gauge the quality of teaching accurately and identify specific areas for development with precision. There is appropriately high priority and urgency attached to the need to make better-quality assessments of pupils' standards which will enable more accurate measures of progress in specific areas and, in turn, point the way to necessary changes in teaching styles. Training has begun on the use of previously neglected computer systems, to support this.

The school's development planning is now precise and well focused. It covers all major aspects of the school's work and prioritises the right things. It includes useful interim measures of success and key indicators that developments are on target and are producing the appropriate outcomes. These are regularly monitored, and the

self-evaluation undertaken so far is accurate. All of this helps improvement strategies to stay on course, and for successes to be recognised and celebrated.

The quality of the work of the governing body has improved as a result of the review it has undertaken with the help of the local authority. The action plan following this review is closely associated with the school's improvement plans. Governors are now much better informed about the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and are much better able to offer challenge to the new executive headteacher and his team.

Parents and carers spoken with during the inspection feel better informed about the school's work now. They said that communications, such as the new regular newsletters, are more frequent and informative, and many enjoy attending events such as the celebration assemblies. These parents and carers feel the school is now moving forwards confidently.

External support

The school receives a wide range of good-quality and well-coordinated support for its work. The local authority plays a significant role, including the provision of leadership and management support from an adviser in the authority; teaching and learning consultants in literacy and mathematics who work with middle leaders and individual teachers to improve provision and the quality of the curriculum; and an Early Years Foundation Stage adviser who also supports the development of phonics teaching. There is also support for the work of the inclusion manager, as well as advice around assessment and the use of systems to monitor pupils' achievement. A local leader in education works for one day each week with senior staff on issues around behaviour management and other policies.

The executive headteacher is orchestrating all of this support to good effect, so that it maintains coherence and contributes directly to the improvements that he knows have to come about. In addition, he is planning to enable staff from Seaford Primary to work with staff to develop teaching and improve provision for pupils.

The diocese continues to offer support to the school, specifically for religious education, and through playing a key role in the pastoral welfare of staff and governors. The diocese representative works closely with the local authority and oversees the support for governors provided by the national leader of governance the diocese helped to find.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the school has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that development planning is fit for purpose.