

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 3115307
Direct email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

5 June 2014

Ms Jo Warnock
Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
St Johns Place
Canterbury
CT1 1BD

Dear Ms Warnock

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

Following my visit to your school on 4 June 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, senior staff, seven members of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

You were absent from just prior to the inspection in February until mid-May. During that time, the local authority commissioned a nearby academy trust to provide leadership. A consultant headteacher also works with the school. Several internal appointments have been made and there is now an acting deputy headteacher, and mathematics and literacy subject leaders. One of your senior leaders is absent and a teacher is currently on maternity leave. The local authority has applied to the Department for Education to set up an Interim Executive Board (IEB).

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The local authority acted quickly to secure effective interim leadership during your authorised absence and it is clear that many appropriate actions were taken immediately following the inspection. These include allocating leadership roles and providing training for leaders. Suitable arrangements have been put in place to support teachers, particularly inexperienced ones. All teachers have been able to observe good and outstanding practice in other schools and there have been valuable opportunities for staff to work with colleagues from other schools to make sure that the checks on pupils' writing skills are accurate. It is important that these initial actions are built on to ensure that good practice becomes embedded.

The behaviour management policy has been tightened up and the systems for improving attendance appear to be having a positive impact. Attendance, although still below average, has improved, and there has been a reduction in poor behaviour. During the visit, I accompanied you and four children on a tour of the school. Throughout the school, there was a calm, purposeful atmosphere, with most pupils fully involved with their learning. Nonetheless, the quality of work, particularly in the older classes, shows that there is much to do to improve their skills and speed up the rate of progress. This is reflected in the school's latest tracking of pupils' progress, which shows that, this year, pupils in most classes have not made sufficient progress, particularly in writing.

The local authority's statement of action provided a useful steer for the school and has since been revised due to the recent changes in leadership. The school's own plan benefited from the guidance of the consultant headteacher and, to a great extent, mirrors the local authority plan. The actions and targets require review to ensure everyone is fully aware of what improvements need to be made at each milestone to ensure that improvement is happening as fast as is required for the school to improve sufficiently quickly. Although recent monitoring shows that the quality of teaching is improving, there is still some inadequate practice which needs to be tackled urgently. The school requires intensive external support at classroom and leadership level, and it is important that this support is accepted, built on and followed up thoroughly by school leaders.

There has been a period of uncertainty following your authorised absence, the section 5 inspection and your recent return to the school. The governors believe that they were not consulted on some important decision making immediately following the inspection and that this hindered their ability to become involved in the initial recovery process. As a result, they do not yet have systems in place to systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the impact of improvement planning. They have been involved in activities relating to the ongoing building work and attend the local authority-led regular progress and review meetings. They are

therefore aware that pupils in the school are not achieving well enough and that the school did not improve quickly enough in the past. A review of governance has not yet taken place and the local authority has applied to the Department for Education to dissolve the governing body and put an IEB in its place. A review into the use of the pupil premium funding has been commissioned but has not yet reported.

Relationships between the local authority, governors and the school leaders are not good and are in danger of restricting the speed of improvement. It is important that everyone now works together to improve the education of the pupils in St John's as quickly as possible.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Diocese of Canterbury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector