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12 June 2014

Mrs Jackie Micklethwaite
Acting Headteacher
St Giles Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Starkholmes Road
Matlock
DE4 3DD

Dear Mrs Micklethwaite

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Giles Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10–11 June, 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 third 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 newly qualified teachers.

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 Derbyshire and the Director of Education for Derbyshire Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - lessons are planned more precisely to enable all groups of pupils, including those who find learning more difficult and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, to learn at a more rapid rate
 - lessons proceed at a challenging pace so that pupils are required to respond quickly and their interest in what they are learning is maintained throughout the lesson
 - teachers ask questions that challenge all pupils to think deeply about their learning more frequently during lessons
 - the good practice that is beginning to emerge is shared systematically to improve the quality of teaching and learning in all classes.

- Improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers review and revise as necessary the way in which they teach phonics so that older pupils who are behind in their reading receive the support they need
 - most pupils make the progress that is expected and a substantial proportion make more than expected progress so that they attain higher standards in all aspects of literacy and numeracy
 - the individual or additional support given to pupils who find learning difficult is more focused on pupils' needs, particularly in the case of pupils who join Key Stage 2 with weak writing and numeracy skills
 - teachers in all classes provide regular opportunities for pupils to refine their numeracy skills by using them to solve real-life problems, and encourage them to work more independently without waiting for help and direction.

- Improve the leadership and governance of the school by ensuring that:
 - leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are regular, rigorous and systematic and take full account of the points for improvement raised in this inspection

- judgments about teaching and teachers' progress up the pay scales are expressly linked to how well teachers are contributing to school improvement
- teachers, governors and the local authority cooperate and work effectively to identify successful ways of improving teaching and to ensure that groups of pupils making insufficient progress are identified quickly
- by the end of the Summer Term 2013, the governing body ensures that the school's administration systems comply fully with current requirements for safeguarding
- the governing body develops fully effective systems for holding the school to account for the quality of teaching and the progress that all pupils make
- governors make regular checks on the use and impact of the pupil premium on pupils' progress
- an external review of governance is undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 10–11 June 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. She spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day. The inspector visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, and evaluated a sample of pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the permanent headteacher has been absent from school. The headteacher's responsibilities are currently being shared between a part-time, temporary acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Building work has recently been completed to create a new entrance area and school office. Two new parent governors have been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is accelerating because the quality of teaching is improving. As a result, the overall standards pupils are achieving in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with, or above, those expected for their age. However, not enough pupils are currently working at the higher levels, particularly in mathematics, due to their prior underachievement. This is because, in the past, teaching has not been sufficiently challenging.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress from their varied starting points. They are being well prepared for Year 1, with the majority of them reaching a good level of development.

Pupils supported through the pupil premium are receiving extra support in lessons and through intervention work. The school's most recent tracking shows that they are making quicker progress than previously and, as a result, are closing the gap between themselves and other pupils.

Teachers' planning identifies discrete activities for those pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Skilled teaching assistants provide balanced and sensitive support and, as a result, these pupils are gaining confidence to tackle more challenging work.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving and this is underpinning the improving progress of different groups of pupils. Teachers are working hard and with success to improve

their teaching. They have tidied classrooms and are using new, high-quality resources.

Teaching is becoming more consistent. There are a number of good features in most lessons: lessons are well planned using a common format, behaviour is well managed and expectations about what pupils can achieve in lessons have been raised. All staff are clearly identifying the learning intentions, context, and success criteria in lesson planning. The impact of this can be seen in pupils' improved engagement in their learning and in their improved understanding of what they have to do succeed and move their learning forward. Most teachers strike a good balance between pupils listening and working. All teachers and teaching assistants are using questioning more effectively to identify and address misconceptions, as well as to assess pupils' understanding and, where appropriate, to move them more quickly on to the next steps in their learning.

Teachers' expectations of what different groups of pupils should achieve are rising. They are using assessment information more effectively to pitch work at the right level for pupils, particularly where teaching is good. However, sometimes introductions to lessons for the whole class are not as useful as they need to be. This is because, although teachers plan different work for pupils to complete based on ability, they give the same introduction to all pupils. While this is helpful for some of the pupils, for others it is not, because it does not prepare them for the work that they will be doing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to each other and to learning. As teaching is improving and teachers have higher expectations, pupils are taking increasing responsibility for their learning. Pupils were observed behaving well, and safely, in classrooms and in other areas of the school, including the playground. Pupils are proud to be chosen for the new 'golden table' as a reward for exceptional behaviour at lunchtime. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and enjoy good friendships with no fear of intimidating behaviour.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are providing strong, ambitious and effective leadership. Together, they are identifying weaknesses quickly, addressing them effectively, and taking urgent steps to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. As a result, teaching is improving, and the confidence and skills of all staff are growing. Responsibility for school improvement is being shared as subject leaders build their skills of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of their areas of responsibility. The school is being rapidly transformed into one which has a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement. There is a shared, strong determination to succeed.

The governing body reports that the quality of information they get from the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher is good. It is giving them a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and what still needs to be improved. Governors' improved understanding of the school's assessment data mean that they are much more effectively holding the school's leaders to account. Governors are continuing to improve their skills through a range of training programmes and support from the local authority. New governors are receiving induction training.

Relationships with parents and carers are much improved since the last monitoring visit. Parents and carers report that the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are 'easy to approach' and respond quickly and effectively to any concerns they have. Confidence in the leadership of the school has been restored. Parents say that they have a clearer understanding of the schools' systems, procedures and expectations as a result of improved communications. Parents appreciate the more-accessible location of the new school office and the warm welcome and help they receive.

Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and meet current requirements.

External support

The school continues to benefit from the good support and challenge provided by the local authority and diocese. The intensity of this support has been reduced since the previous monitoring visit. This is because the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are bringing greater clarity about what needs to be done and other leaders are developing skills quickly. As a result, the school is becoming less reliant on external support. The local authority has sound plans to ensure that high-quality leadership and management are sustained in both the medium and long term.