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Chris Errington
Headteacher
St Michael's Church of England Primary School
Hazel Grove
Bedworth
CV12 9DA

Dear Mr Errington

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

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 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 January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior staff, four members of the governing body including the Chair, and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Other documents were examined, including: the school's checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning; records of discussions held with teachers about pupils' progress; minutes of meetings of the governing body; and information about pupils' current achievement. Short visits were made to classrooms to talk to pupils and look at their learning.

Context

Two governors have resigned since the previous inspection and two associate governors have been appointed. One teacher is due to leave at the end of this term

to take up a post at another school. Three new teachers have been appointed and will join the school in September. More children will join the Reception class in September than in previous years. A programme of building work is scheduled to take place over the summer holidays to accommodate this increase.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You, your senior leaders and governors have accepted the findings of the inspection and have responded with determination for the school to improve. You have worked with the local authority to produce a comprehensive 'rapid improvement plan'. This sets out a clear timescale by which you expect the school to become good and includes actions to address all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The plan clearly shows who is responsible for ensuring actions are carried out, who will check it has happened and how you will judge if improvement is being made. What is not made clear is when you will evaluate whether progress is sufficiently rapid.

You have provided training and support for teachers to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. These initiatives have increased teachers' confidence and the quality of teaching is beginning to improve. For example, the impact of training about effective use of questions was sometimes evident in the questioning observed during this inspection. Furthermore, following a series of meetings, teachers have raised the profile of homework and have taken steps to help parents become more involved in their children's learning at home. As a result, your records show that more pupils are completing homework tasks and are using homework as an opportunity to practise their skills.

You and your senior leaders have set up a programme of monitoring activities to check if teachers are following agreed practices, such as those established to improve the presentation of pupils' work and the impact of marking. However, some teachers have not adhered to agreed procedures and therefore improvement has been too slow. For example, the teacher responsible for literacy has set clear guidelines for how teachers should improve pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work. Pupils' books show that these expectations had some impact but several books seen during this inspection were very untidy and pupils' handwriting was sometimes difficult to read. This is because checks by senior leaders are not frequent enough and you do not rigorously follow up findings to ensure issues are resolved.

Check on pupils' books by senior leaders do not focus sharply enough on whether the agreed approaches are improving pupils' learning. For example, most teachers are trying to follow the agreed marking policy and spend considerable time writing

comments in pupils' books, but this is having limited impact on pupils' progress. One reason for this is that teachers do not always ensure pupils make suggested improvements (known by pupils as 'next steps'). Some next steps do not show pupils precisely how to improve and so are not helpful. Some books indicate that teachers do not always move pupils on to harder work as soon as they are ready, particularly in mathematics. This limits the progress pupils can make in a lesson. Furthermore, although some teachers now place greater emphasis on correcting pupils' spelling and punctuation errors in line with your policy, this is not so in all classes so improvement in pupils' work is inconsistent.

The new reading, writing and mathematics targets show what pupils must do to achieve the next level and are helping raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve. Pupils' books show that where targets are being used well, teachers and pupils have a shared understanding of how well pupils are doing and what they need to improve. Not all teachers are using the system effectively. Consequently, the impact on pupils' progress is variable.

Significant changes in the organisation and teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) for younger pupils have led to pupils acquiring these skills more rapidly. This year's national check for Year 1 pupils shows a sizeable increase in the number who achieved the expected standard compared to last year.

Your new system for tracking pupils' progress provides easier access to a range of useful information about the performance of different groups. You and your senior leaders are beginning to use this more effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make. You meet formally with teachers each term to discuss pupils' progress and to agree strategies for helping pupils catch up where necessary. Nevertheless, some pupils still make too little progress because these meetings do not happen often enough to ensure you intervene immediately if pupils are falling behind.

You now provide governors with more detailed information about pupils' achievement. Governors have been trained to understand what this shows and are now better placed to hold you to account for pupils' achievement. Governors are beginning to also use this information to build a more accurate picture of the quality of teaching. They are well informed about the actions you are taking to improve the quality of teaching, but do not challenge you rigorously enough to demonstrate these action are having swift impact on pupils' learning.

The local authority prepared a statement of action in response to the judgement that the school requires special measures. It sets out how the local authority will support and challenge the school to make rapid, sustainable improvement and to work in

partnership with parents. Although the statement of action meets these basic requirements (and is therefore fit for purpose), it contains some inconsistencies with the school's action plan and some factual inaccuracies. In addition, it does not clearly set out the precise actions that will be taken. For example, the school has been supported by a Local Leader in Education (LLE) to successfully address the weaknesses in the teaching of phonics. This is not detailed in the statement of action. It is anticipated that support from the LLE will continue to be available. The statement of action does not show what the local authority has agreed with the LLE or what the school can expect from such support.

Following the monitoring inspection the following 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 Warwickshire and the Diocese of Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector