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Ms Virginia Fraher
The Interim Headteacher
St Mary's RC Primary School
Canterbury Road
London
NW6 5ST

Dear Ms Fraher

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Mary's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 September 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 March 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of middle leaders, the interim Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority. You gave me a short tour of the school during which we visited classrooms, the playground and communal areas. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. I scrutinised the school's record of recruitment checks and minutes of governing body meetings since the last inspection.

Context

Since the inspection, there have been a significant number of changes to the school's staffing. An interim headteacher has been appointed and seven teachers new to the school started work at the beginning of the academic year. The Vice Chair is acting as interim Chair of the Governing Body until the governing body elections later this month. There have been some changes to the responsibilities of middle leaders.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

A period of substantial instability has hindered the school's progress since the inspection. A high proportion of teaching staff left the school at the end of the summer term, including the headteacher. The interim headteacher, governors and local authority are now working closely together to bring about the improvements needed. Having completed a number of detailed reviews of the school's practices, the local authority is now well placed to provide the right support. It is working with the school to clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff so that all members of the school community can be held to account.

A review of governance arrangements has taken place, the recommendations of which have been embraced by governors. Following the inspection, governors have reflected on their roles and have identified key actions to enable them to be more effective. Governors are planning to embark on a series of structured visits to the school so that they can monitor the impact of the actions the school is taking. Governors are committed to undertaking further training in order to understand better how they can support and challenge leaders more effectively. Governing body meetings are now more regular, with a greater focus on pupils' achievement. Governors are adopting a more proactive approach to engaging with school leaders.

The local authority has implemented a range of supportive measures for the school. For example, several teachers have visited a local outstanding school to check that the judgements they make about pupils' work are accurate. The local authority has established a Rapid Improvement Group that will evaluate the school's progress. It is responsible for holding those supporting the school to account and will meet regularly to check whether progress is being made quickly enough. This group is led by a senior officer of the local authority. The local authority's statement for action addresses each of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. To sharpen the plan, further detail should be added to indicate the expected attainment of pupils at key points during the year. Proportions of pupils targeted to make more than expected progress should also be made clear. This will enable the Rapid Improvement Group to judge the rate of the school's progress more effectively. When considering the quality of teaching, the plan should refer to the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time, rather than within individual lessons.

A parent forum has been established, comprising parents of pupils in each year group. Although this is at an early stage, it is improving communication with parents and providing a vehicle for consultation.

The headteacher has established a new structure of meetings for leaders and staff so that consistent messages are received by everyone. Since the inspection, the behaviour policy has been reviewed so that all staff can apply a consistent approach to behaviour management. It is now everybody's responsibility to uphold agreed

expectations of behaviour. Although early in the term, the headteacher has already taken action to add further detail to the school's action plan in the light of her observation and evaluation of the school's work.

Leaders are increasingly aware of the need to evaluate the success of approaches to teaching so that adjustments can be made to respond to pupils' needs. Pupils are assessed more regularly so that leaders can keep a closer eye on the progress they make. Teachers now look more closely at what pupils have achieved, adjusting plans for subsequent work in the light of their observations. Teachers now plan using a new format which allows them to be more precise when planning work for pupils of different abilities.

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 Brent and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Her Majesty's Inspector