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18 September 2014

Mrs Leanne Brydon  
Headteacher  
St Brendan's Catholic Primary School  
Beanfield Avenue  
Corby  
NN18 0AZ

Dear Mrs Brydon

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Brendan's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit with Jane Ferguson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 16–17 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 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 March 2014. 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Julia Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - providing training and support, in partnership with the local teaching school and other providers, to model the expectations of good or better teaching
  - checking that pupils respond appropriately to the written comments made on their work so that they are ready to move on in their learning
  - making sure that assessment information and checks on pupils' progress are used to set challenging work for pupils, in particular the most able, so they make faster progress.
  
- Raise achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that checks on pupils' progress are accurate
  - making sure that the work set is hard enough for the most-able pupils so that more of them achieve the higher levels
  - checking the consistency and impact of the support pupils receive, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, so that all of them make at least good progress.
  
- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels and build the capacity of the school to improve by providing a programme of coaching and mentoring for senior and other leaders so that they acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to:
  - check the quality of teaching
  - develop and use effectively systems to measure the progress of different groups
  - create and implement improvement plans, especially for English and mathematics, that set clear targets for improvement, show how actions will be monitored and evaluated and identify who will check their success
  - set performance targets for teachers that are closely linked to pupils' achievement.
  
- Increasing governors' understanding of, and involvement in, checking and challenging the school's performance to give them a realistic view of the school's effectiveness so that they can hold the school's leaders rigorously to account.

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 management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 16–17 September 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and examined samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and writing. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the commissioned headteacher, middle leaders, and representatives from the governing body. Inspectors spoke with two groups of pupils and informally with parents. An inspector listened to pupils read. A telephone conversation took place with the senior school improvement officer from the local authority. Inspectors observed 12 parts of lessons, 10 of which were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the acting headteacher has been appointed to the substantive role. Four governors have resigned, three of whom have been replaced. Two teachers have been recruited on a temporary basis to teach in Year 1 and Year 5. Four classes in Years 5 and 6 have been reduced to three, with one mixed-age group. The proposed building work in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been postponed.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

In 2014, Year 6 pupils, and especially the most able, made less progress than they should in reading, writing and mathematics, although reading and writing improved compared to the previous year. The achievement of pupils currently in Year 6 is improving, particularly for those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding. This is a result of the additional support that these pupils are receiving. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children. The school has adopted a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and this is having a positive effect on pupils' engagement and progress. The percentage of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage reaching a good level of development is in line with national expectations. The local authority has verified that assessments by teachers are increasingly accurate. The introduction of guided reading sessions in Key Stages 1 and 2 is starting to have an impact on the progress pupils make in reading. Pupils report that these sessions help them to build their confidence and extend their vocabulary.

The school now has effective systems in place to identify children who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Staff know these pupils well and evidence from their books shows that work set is well suited to their specific learning needs. Teaching assistants are also providing more effective support. As a result, the achievement of these pupils is improving rapidly.

## **The quality of teaching**

School leaders have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching. In order to make the best use of their skills, some teachers are now teaching different year groups. In Years 5 and 6, teachers and their teaching assistants have observed good practice in a local outstanding school. This is having a positive influence on their teaching and the progress of their pupils. A new policy has been introduced that sets out minimum requirements for marking. Good practice is starting to be evident, with children having more opportunities to respond to teachers' comments in order to move on in their learning. However, the quality of marking and feedback remains inconsistent among teachers. Spelling mistakes and incorrect use of English are not always corrected. Staff are not always clear about how to measure when a child has been successful. As a result, children do not always know when they have produced work of high quality, nor know how to accelerate their progress further.

A common pro-forma for planning lessons has been introduced; the majority of teachers have adopted this. Teachers use information about individual pupils to plan lessons more effectively; consequently, progress in Years 1, 2 and 3 is improving. Recent training has taken place in the use of questioning to improve progress. The best examples seen were when teachers followed the new school policy of 'no hands up'. When this happened, children were questioned according to their ability, and, as a result, made good progress.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

This aspect of the school was not addressed in any depth during this inspection as it was not a concern in the section 5 report. Pupils behave positively around school and are respectful of both adults and each other. They attend school regularly and effective actions are taken to improve the punctuality of the very small number of children who arrive late. Behaviour logs are in place and leaders analyse this information to ensure that appropriate support is available. Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely positive. In a few classes, they become restless as a result of the work being too hard or too easy for them.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The new headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is rigorous in her approach to driving improvements. She demonstrates a high degree of resilience and determination. Staff and governors agree that she has created a more open culture in the school and this has served to improve staff morale. She and other leaders have benefited from the coaching provided by the commissioned headteacher. All staff, including teaching assistants, are aware of the scale of the challenges ahead and are now approaching these with a sense of urgency. The headteacher has retained some responsibilities from her

previous role. Governors recognise this and are mindful of the need to review job descriptions once the deputy headteacher vacancy has been filled.

Since the last monitoring visit, school leaders have refined their information systems to enable them to track pupils' progress more effectively. Teachers are now provided with this information to inform their planning. Leaders use this information to carefully track the progress of pupils and provide timely additional support.

School leaders have introduced a new system of teacher profiles. These allow leaders to monitor the performance of teachers rigorously and promote their professional development. They incorporate a range of measures, including the achievement of groups of pupils. Leaders are able to respond immediately to aspects of teaching that are not good enough. This has resulted in the provision of effective training and support to individual teachers. At present, not all subjects are monitored using this system.

Following the first monitoring visit, leaders have amended the school improvement plan and it now includes success criteria to measure progress for the most-able pupils. Leaders recognise that the writing and mathematics targets for most-able pupils in Year 6 could be more aspirational. Separate improvement plans, derived from the over-arching plan, are now in place for mathematics and English and are monitored regularly. Training for middle leaders remains a priority for the school.

Governors remain fully involved in the work of the school. They now have a very good understanding of the school's effectiveness and hold school leaders rigorously to account. Governors have taken decisive action to secure the appointment of the headteacher and the process is underway to recruit a substantive deputy headteacher. A number of new governor appointments have been made, and this has enhanced the skill set of the governing body. A review of the use of pupil premium has taken place very recently but the recommendations have not yet been implemented. The external review of governance will take place later this term. Governors are currently in discussions regarding the conversion of the school to an academy.

### **External support**

School leaders are accessing coordinated support from a number of sources. The senior local authority improvement officer knows the school well; the headteacher values her support. She has brokered the partnership with a local outstanding primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the coordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities have worked with their counterparts at this school. As a result, they have developed their expertise and received valuable advice on how to establish appropriate systems to track pupils' progress. The local authority carry out regular monitoring visits in conjunction with the headteacher of the partner school. Their reports accurately evaluate the quality of all aspects of provision and provide useful advice for further development. The local cluster of

Catholic primary schools is keen to support the school and has jointly funded the continuation of the support of the commissioned headteacher. This support has now been reduced to one day a week, reflecting the headteacher's increasing confidence to lead the school. The commissioned headteacher has secured external funding to broker more school-to-school support.