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Mrs Michelle Slymn
Headteacher
Dawley Church of England Primary School with Nursery
Doseley Road North
Dawley
Telford
TF4 3AL

Dear Mrs Slymn

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Dawley Church of England Primary School with Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 21 October 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in December 2013. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Telford and Wrekin.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Cc. Chair of the Governing Body
Cc. Local authority
Cc. Diocese

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - check how well pupils are doing in the lesson, and move pupils on to challenging activities as soon as they have fully understood the initial work and are ready to do them
 - give pupils time to develop their answers to questions and allow them the opportunity to discuss their learning with each other
 - teach about letters and the sounds they make effectively.

- Raise pupils' achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring pupils are presented with new ideas in the right order so they can build on their earlier learning
 - making sure that pupils record calculations where needed and helping them learn from mistakes
 - providing teachers with training about different approaches and ways of explaining mathematics.

- Improve pupils' attendance by communicating well with parents.

- Improve the effectiveness of senior leadership and management by:
 - taking swift and effective action to ensure strategies for improvement succeed
 - using the funding from the pupil premium more effectively to close the gap in achievement between eligible pupils and other groups
 - making sure that governors use their recent training in understanding information about pupils' achievement to regularly and effectively hold school leaders to account.

Ofsted has made recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 21 October 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and three other members of the board. I also met with a representative from the local authority. You accompanied me on visits to all

classes to review pupils' work and talk to pupils about their learning and progress. I viewed the single central register as new staff have joined the school since the first monitoring inspection visit in June 2014. I also looked at other documentation including the school's action plan and the local authority's statement of action, information about pupils' achievement and attendance, and records about teachers' performance. This monitoring inspection focused in particular on the work the school has done to address the areas for improvement relating to the quality of teaching and attendance.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection visit, one teacher has left and one new teacher has joined the school. You joined the school as headteacher on 1 September 2014. A new deputy headteacher started on 1 September 2014. This was the result of an internal promotion.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since joining the school in September, you have maintained the urgent focus on addressing the areas of weakness identified in the previous section 5 inspection. Prior to taking up your post in September, you were able to spend some time in the school. This has helped you to sustain the pace of the school's improvement. With the new deputy headteacher, you have restructured some aspects of leadership and you have revised the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team. As a result, there are clear lines of accountability and leaders have a good understanding of their roles. Senior leaders are committed to improving the school quickly and have an accurate view of what needs to be done to achieve this. However, the external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding has not yet taken place. This should be organised urgently.

You have swiftly identified and started to address weaknesses in teaching. Teachers are clear about the school's agreed 'teaching practices' and your high expectations of them. You and other senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and the work in pupils' books. You are using the information you gather about teaching to tailor specific support to individual teacher's needs. You have organised visits to local schools so that teachers can learn from outstanding practice. As a result, your records show that there have been some improvements in the quality of teaching. You recognise that there is more work to be done to make sure that teaching is consistently good and that all pupils achieve well.

The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has continued to improve. Your records show that more pupils are working at the standards expected for their age in this important aspect of early reading. You recognise that some staff need further training and support to make sure that the teaching of phonics is consistently good.

Actions taken to improve attendance are having a positive impact. The newsletters and the text messaging system have improved communications with parents and carers. Pupils are aware of the importance of attending school regularly. They value the certificates and awards for good attendance. Your records show that attendance, from the beginning of September to date, has improved when compared to the same period last year.

The Interim Executive Board continues to provide a good level of support and challenge. The members of the board make purposeful visits to the school. Notes from governing body meetings shows that they use the information provided by yourself and the deputy headteacher to check the impact of the actions taken on pupils' achievement.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The headteacher has revised the roles and responsibilities of leadership within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Clear lines of accountability have been established.
- Leaders of mathematics and English are effectively using information about pupils' achievement to inform how they will improve their subject areas. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and the quality of teaching in their subjects.
- For most pupils, achievement is improving in reading and writing because the quality of teaching is helping them to make better progress. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers are planning more opportunities for pupils to write at length. Some teachers are providing clear guidance to help pupils to improve their writing.
- Teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) continues to improve. Some pupils are beginning to make accelerated progress. This is helping them to catch up with previous underperformance.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is currently close to national figures. This indicates that pupils are happy to come to school. Attendance data is recorded and monitored rigorously. Communication with parents about attendance has improved.
- Members of the Interim Executive Board have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have the necessary skills to support and challenge the school.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Work in pupils' books shows that some teachers are not checking how well pupils are doing during the lesson and moving the pupils that are ready on to more challenging activities.

- Teachers' feedback and marking are not always precise enough to lead to improvement. Therefore, pupils are not clear about how to improve their work and make good progress in their learning.
- The school's system for recording pupils' progress is over-complicated. Leaders cannot easily check the progress of pupils from their different starting points. As a result, it is not easy to check the progress of different ability groups and take prompt action to address any weaknesses.
- Teachers are more aware of the gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. However, in some classes pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills. This hinders progress in mathematics.
- Leaders have not yet organised an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding.
- The targets in the school's improvement plan have not been amended in line with the local authority's statement of action. As a result, leaders cannot easily check that the school is meeting the targets set by the local authority within the agreed timescale. These two documents should be aligned.

External support

Advisers from the local authority support the school effectively. They worked closely with the school to ensure a smooth transition between the previous interim headteacher and the new headteacher. They have sourced a link with a local good school. This is contributing to improvements in teaching. The targets in the local authority's statement of action have been amended appropriately as discussed with HMI during the previous monitoring inspection.