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24 October 2014

Mrs Natalie Tomlinson
Headteacher
St Chad's CE Primary School
Gladstone Street
Winsford
Cheshire
CW7 4AT

Dear Mrs Tomlinson

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Chad's CE Primary School

Following my visit with Kathleen Harris, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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 appoint up to two newly qualified teachers, one in each key stage, 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, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chester and the Strategic Director of Children's Services for Cheshire West and Chester.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to good or better in order to raise standards and ensure pupils make at least good achievement by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making sure all teachers have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are doing in lessons and build on what they can already do by setting work which provides the right level of challenge
 - making sure teachers' planning promotes the development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects
 - improving marking so that teachers provide helpful next steps for pupils and that they act upon the guidance to improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding have their learning needs met well
 - making sure all teachers have high expectations about how pupils behave in lessons to ensure learning time is not lost
 - teachers ensuring that pupils concentrate and listen carefully to their instructions and guidance so that they know how to learn well
 - providing a wider range of learning activities in the outdoor area of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels including governance, so that the school improves quickly by:
 - ensuring that pupils' progress is checked closely to identify pupils who are not doing well enough and taking swift action to help them catch up quickly
 - ensuring that school leaders at all levels rigorously check on the quality of teaching and learning and take decisive action to bring about improvements where needed
 - making sure leaders, including governors, make better use of the pupil premium funding to boost the progress and attainment of those pupils eligible for support
 - ensuring that plans for improving the school identify the key priorities, have specific targets and a clear series of actions that are checked regularly to ensure the school is moving forward
 - strengthening the ability of governors to hold the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' achievement
 - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 October 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, the inclusion manager and the family support worker, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, parents, pupils, governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. A telephone interview was held with a Local Leader in Education (LLE) who is providing support to the headteacher.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection in May 2014, two of the three additional governors appointed by the local authority have become full members of the governing body. There has been a change of teacher in Year 4.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' standards and progress are improving. Some significant gains have been made. However, the legacy of inadequate teaching at the school has left gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and pupils are not yet reaching their full potential.

Standards are rising. Since the first monitoring inspection, the results of the national, end of key stage tests and assessments have been made available. In 2013, the results for Year 6 pupils were below the minimum standards set by the government for primary schools. In 2014, the results are above these floor targets. Standards rose in each of the core aspects of reading, writing and in mathematics. However, too few pupils reached the expected levels in all of reading, writing and mathematics and too few made the progress expected of them in mathematics.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average. Pupils' knowledge of the sounds letters make (phonics) is tested in Year 1 and significant improvement has been made since 2013. A radical improvement has been measured in the proportion of children at the end of their Reception Year who achieved the good level of development specified for children in the early years. Some indication of the future potential of pupils' achievement is observable in the Reception class, as the legacy of previous inadequate teaching is not present there.

The school's analysis of the 2014 results indicates that some groups of pupils made particularly good progress, such as those who received additional help because they were at risk of falling behind, and the most able pupils, some of whom made exceptional progress with better teaching. However, not all groups do well. Boys do significantly less well than girls and pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government money) achieve less well than those who are not eligible.

Observations of lessons and of pupils' work in their exercise books suggest that the new school year has got off to a good start. Pupils' work is plentiful, of a good standard and very well presented. High standards are particularly noticeable in Years 5 and 6, with the quality of written work for pupils of all abilities being particularly high.

The school has an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and some with disabilities. The great majority of these pupils make good progress; provision for them is a clear strength. A small minority of pupils experience difficulties of a profound and complex nature that severely inhibits their learning. The school excels at helping parents of these pupils to cope and in securing the support of external agencies. While these pupils may not be making the same progress other pupils are making, their social and emotional needs are being met and they are fully included in the life of the school.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving strongly. It was judged inadequate in the section 5 inspection of January 2014. The evaluations of senior staff about teaching are in agreement with the outcomes of monitoring exercises conducted by local authority officers and consultants and confirm this improvement. However, teaching is not yet consistently good, except in the minority of classes. As teaching needs to be consistently good in order to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding from previous years, further improvement is required.

Good progress has been made in all the issues raised by the section 5 inspection. High expectations are embedded. Teachers know where pupils are up to and what they need to do next. Work is planned for pupils of different abilities and generally succeeds in providing an appropriate level of challenge. Expectations of teachers' planning are high; for example, teachers are expected to develop literacy and numeracy skills within other subjects and make their aims explicit. Marking varies in its effectiveness. Some is of exceptional quality; older pupils in particular are encouraged to judge their work for themselves or show it to other pupils for comment. On occasions, the perceptiveness of the pupils' comments is of such an order an uninformed reader would believe them to be written by the teacher.

Teachers and teaching support staff are well organised to meet the remaining challenges in raising pupils' achievement. The low morale evident a year ago has disappeared. Staff now form cohesive teams of teachers and teaching assistants, flexible and adaptable in order to meet pupils' learning needs.

The quality of provision in Reception has improved significantly. Children beginning school in September have settled very well. Indoors and out, children within the early years are provided with a variety of stimulating opportunities to learn through play. During this inspection, children were focused on learning about numbers. Independently and when taught, indoors and out, children were absorbed in their

learning. The outdoor opportunities for learning were criticised in the section 5 inspection report. Reception staff now make creative use of the limited space. During this inspection, as many pupils were learning outdoors as there were indoors.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The section 5 inspection raised concerns about low-level disturbance within lessons, which hindered learning. There are no longer any such concerns. The behaviour and consideration shown around school by pupils and their attitudes to learning in class are so improved they are now a noteworthy strength. This was demonstrated on many occasions during the inspection. Examples include: the respect and attention shown by pupils during a class assembly; the politeness shown to inspectors when pupils opened doors for them; and the manner with which Year 6 pupils supported Reception children during a craft-work session. There are many reasons for the improvement in behaviour, among them: the pupils' interest in the work teachers prepare for them; the introduction of a range of extra-curricular opportunities, trips and events; and the staff's recognition of good behaviour and consideration for others through a comprehensive array of rewards. Parents spoken to were pleased with the improvements in the school and their children's new enthusiasm for learning, for example through homework. They particularly appreciated the introduction of out-of-school opportunities for their children, such as the football team, which had immediate success in a local competition.

No issues for improvement in safeguarding pupils were identified in the section 5 inspection. Nevertheless, the school has continued to develop rigorous safeguarding procedures and update training for staff and governors. There are designated members of staff and a governor for safeguarding who have undertaken higher-level training. New staff are comprehensively screened and vetted and records are in line with safeguarding requirements.

Attendance has improved to over 95%, slightly above the national average. The introduction of a successful breakfast club has improved attendance and punctuality.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Good progress in all aspects of leadership and management has been maintained. Moreover, good leadership is more securely embedded and better developed. The senior team of headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and inclusion leader has grown into a very cohesive team, enjoying the full confidence of staff. New ways of improving the work of the school through teams of teachers and teaching assistants, each led by a senior leader, are focusing staff on improvement and ensuring everyone's contribution is valued. The headteacher's vision for the school is becoming a reality; for example, in its partnership with the pre-school to ensure the best possible start to school for children entering Reception and in reinforcing the school's Church of England foundation.

The performance of the school, particularly the progress of pupils, is rigorously monitored, so senior staff are developing a thorough and accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. The accuracy of their judgements is affirmed by the local authority. They have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and where improvement is needed, especially in the consistency of good and better teaching. The leadership for provision for pupils with special educational needs and for family support has improved considerably and is now well established. The inclusion team has more time available to it than previously and is working with increasing effectiveness. This is of particular importance, as a minority of families served by the school face increasing challenges. For such families, the inclusion team is having a positive impact well beyond the school's gates.

The curriculum is being developed. Foundation subjects are now taught in an integrated fashion in themes that have interest and relevance for pupils. Leaders are aware of the need to provide progression in foundation subjects and opportunities for the practice of literacy and numeracy skills within themes. Already this term, some impressive work is on display and recorded in books, such as that commemorating the First World War in Year 6, on the Anglo Saxons in Year 5 and on space exploration in Reception. Resources deployed are imaginative and of quality, such as 'War Horse' for World War 1 and the tale of 'Beowulf' for the Anglo Saxons. Many of the themes have strong moral and cultural threads, promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development much better than in the past.

Governance has continued its improvement and is now almost in a position for additional support to be no longer required. Governance has benefited from a review led by a National Leader of Governance (NLG) and rigorous monitoring by the local authority as part of its routine reviews of progress. The governing body is better organised along lines that mirror the school's priorities and it is developing its own action plan. It is representative of the community it serves and individual governors have a range of relevant skills to bring to bear. It is increasingly well led and in a stronger position to provide the required oversight of the school and whether its use of public money is effective.

External support

The local authority continues to provide and coordinate good support and challenge for the school and its governing body. The School Improvement Officer plays a key role in her liaison with the school, organising support from consultants and running evaluative reviews of progress. These are discussed when senior officers hold the school to account for its progress in its regular meetings. There is a good balance between support and challenge and the local authority can point to effective intervention in both. The LLE has provided the headteacher with valuable support from the point of view of an experienced colleague. The NLG has completed her remit, successfully honouring the condition required by the section 5 inspection of a review of governance, including the school's spending of the pupil premium grant.