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Tracey McCarthy
Headteacher
Swaffham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School
Brandon Road
Swaffham
PE37 7EA

Dear Miss McCarthy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Swaffham CofE VC Junior School

Following my visit with Susan Heptinstall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 November 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 February 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 not making enough 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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely
John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching in all classes by ensuring that:
 - errors and misconceptions are picked up and corrected as they occur in lessons and in pupils' work
 - work is marked regularly
 - high expectations are set for pupils, so that they do their very best work
 - activities are provided at the right level of difficulty to interest and challenge pupils, particularly the most able.
- Improve the achievement of pupils whose progress is slow, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that assessments about pupils' attainment are accurate
 - improving the use of systems for tracking pupils' progress, identifying those at risk of underachieving and taking swift action to accelerate their progress.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - immediate actions are taken to ensure that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding are robust and that the carrying out and recording of safety checks is regular and rigorous
 - senior and subject leaders assess the quality of teaching, taking into account the impact teaching is having on pupils' progress over time
 - the roles and responsibilities of support staff in lessons are clear and appropriate training is provided
 - the school development plan is refined, focuses sharply on the main priorities and has clear targets which measure the effect of actions on pupils' achievement.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
 - ensuring that all staff take full responsibility for managing pupils' behaviour effectively at all times
 - raising attendance levels, particularly for the pupils with the lowest attendance rates
 - raising pupils' awareness and understanding of e-safety
 - ensuring that there is adequate supervision of pupils at playtimes, especially in the garden.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance by:
 - monitoring closely the arrangements to safeguard pupils
 - making sure that the pupil premium is used more effectively, so that gaps in attainment and progress close between eligible pupils and others in the school
 - seeking suitable additional support for the leadership and management of the school.

An external review of governance, including 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 4 and 5 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the deputy headteacher has returned from maternity leave and two new teaching assistants have joined the school. The school will become an academy in February 2015, sponsored by the Diocese of Norwich Education Academy Trust.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The percentage of pupils in Year 6 attaining the expected levels in national tests in English and mathematics fell to below the government's floor standards this year. Floor standards are minimum levels set for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Based on their above average starting points, this represents inadequate progress. School leaders have been unable to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics and in writing; the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 in these subjects has fallen this year and remains below average. The proportion of more able students attaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics, writing and in reading is also much lower than that found nationally.

Results show significant differences in pupils' achievement. For example, far fewer boys met national expectations in English and mathematics compared with girls; very few disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs attained the expected levels in English and mathematics and they made much less progress than other pupils. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others widened.

Observations of lessons and looking in pupils' books confirmed that, currently, pupils are not achieving well enough. This is because teaching is not enabling them to make accelerated progress. Teachers and senior leaders do not have the accurate information they need to check that all pupils receive the support and challenge they need to achieve well.

The quality of teaching

Action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching, but these improvements are not embedded in all classes. The quality of marking varies widely. In English, marking of pupils' work informs them of the level they are working at compared to

the target level they are expected to achieve, but this is not the case in mathematics or other subjects.

More able pupils underachieve because expectations of them remain too low. In lessons, they work steadily rather than quickly because teachers do not set them demanding timescales or targets to meet. Sometimes, work is too easy for them. When asked, pupils say they feel they could be pushed harder. Teachers do not use lesson time well enough to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged to concentrate hard and do enough work.

The roles and responsibilities of support staff remain under-developed so they are unaware of what they need to do to aid pupils' learning in lessons. Less able pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs regularly leave lessons for one-to-one support from teaching assistants. The quality of this provision and the impact it is having on pupils' learning and progress are unclear because these arrangements are not monitored closely by senior leaders.

Staff training has focused on agreeing common features that every lesson should have, and this has led to some improvement. At the start of lessons, teachers share with pupils what they will learn. They refer to wall displays to remind pupils of what they have learnt previously and to show them the next steps in their learning. Most teachers provide pupils with different tasks to do, matched to their ability. Marking is encouraging pupils to follow-up areas they need to improve upon. All these aspects contribute successfully to pupils' progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Teachers and support staff are taking more responsibility for managing pupils' behaviour. Most teachers are applying the agreed procedures to tackle poor behaviour in lessons. Inspectors found that pupils behave well but some, particularly boys, easily lose concentration when teaching does not stimulate their interest. A higher level of adult supervision on the playground is helping to keep pupils safe. However, pupils say that more needs to be done to prevent them from getting hurt in ball games and rough play with others. Training has been provided for pupils and their parents and carers to raise their awareness of keeping safe when using the internet and mobile phones.

School records show attendance is improving. Senior leaders have a wealth of attendance data but are not closely analysing it to detect patterns of absence or to identify the links between persistent absence and underachievement. For example; data show that some disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs are regularly absent from school. These pupils underachieve compared with others.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The last inspection found that senior leaders were not demonstrating that they could bring about improvements in teaching to raise achievement. Some improvements have been made but this year's declining results and the variable quality of teaching show that this is not happening at a sufficient rate to enable the school to be removed from special measures within the given timescale.

There is still a lack of urgency from senior leaders in raising achievement by securing improvements to the quality of teaching. Results and pupils' current work indicate that very little teaching is consistently good. Senior leaders are monitoring lessons and scrutinising work more often, but they are not sufficiently focused on raising teachers' expectations or on holding staff to account for the standards achieved by pupils in their classes. New procedures have been implemented to manage their performance but so far this has made too little impact. Intensive training and support for individual teachers, provided by an experienced practitioner, have led to improvement, but some weak teaching remains.

The headteacher has amended plans for improving the school and introduced new assessment procedures. However, the tracking of pupils' progress is neither systematic nor routine. Teachers do not have a firm enough grasp of these procedures to monitor individual pupils' progress over time. Without this information, they and senior leaders are unable to check whether all pupils are on-track to make the progress expected of them, or to prevent some from underachieving.

The governing body is not ensuring that the pupil premium is spent well enough. The significant funding allocated to the school last year made no difference to disadvantaged pupils' achievement, mainly because it was not targeted specifically towards those it is intended for and not enough checks were made to see if it was aiding their learning and progress.

An external review of governance has provided governors with a detailed plan to improve their effectiveness. However, minutes of recent meetings show that they are not rigorously holding the headteacher to account for the school's performance. Governors are committed to enabling the school to become an academy next year. They and senior leaders acknowledge that much more needs to be done to secure improvements so that the school is fully prepared for this important change. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are firmly in place.

External support

The targets set in the local authority's statement of action for raising achievement were not met this year. Since then, it has increased its level of support and challenge for the school. Its most recent review of provision identified common weaknesses in teaching and the impact this is having on limiting pupils' progress.

Additional support has been brokered to tackle ineffective teaching and to support inexperienced staff. Training in teaching English and mathematics, and in implementing new assessment procedures, has been welcomed by staff. Further challenge from an Improvement Board led by the local authority includes clear targets for the headteacher and some other staff to improve their performance.