CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566857
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:jkinsman@cfbt.com

12 November 2014

Miss Pam Keen
Headteacher
Priory CofE Primary School
Jubilee Road
Trentham
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 8EF

Dear Miss Keen

Special measures monitoring inspection of Priory CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Rosemary Batty, Additional Inspector to your school on 10 and 11 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2013. 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 newly qualified teachers before the next section 5 inspection if guidance and support are provided by a senior leader whose quality of teaching is consistently good or better.

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 Stoke-On-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2103

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide work that closely matches pupils' different needs and abilities so that pupils are effectively challenged and supported in lessons
  - pupils are actively involved in their learning during lessons
  - children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have more frequent access to the outdoor area and that it is planned for and is as stimulating as the indoor classrooms
  - teaching assistants are fully involved in all parts of lessons to support pupils' learning
  - teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their work and pupils are provided with the time they need to respond to their teacher's comments
  - teachers have the opportunity to observe good and better teaching within and beyond the school.

- Accelerate progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4 and raise standards in writing and mathematics, so that an above-average proportion of pupils reaches the expected levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 by:
  - providing more purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and write at length in different subjects
  - ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of basic mathematical skills before going onto more advanced concepts.

- Improve the effectiveness of staff in preventing and dealing with bullying so that pupils' confidence in reporting incidents of bullying grows.

- Improve the impact and effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - developing the skills of all subject and senior leaders so they use data to assess pupils' performance accurately; and use this information to inform their action plans, in order to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement in their subjects.
  - Ensuring that all members of the governing body have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that they can effectively drive the school forward and hold leaders to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

There were no additional priorities identified after the previous visit.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 10 to 11 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and one other member of the IEB, and a group of pupils. Her Majesty's Inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.

During this monitoring inspection, inspectors visited The Link Club which is managed by the IEB and provides before-and-after-school provision. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers informally before and after school. During the monitoring inspection, Year 6 pupils were on a residential trip. On the first day of the inspection, Year 4 pupils were on a school trip.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, two teachers have left the school. The IEB has appointed two new teachers. One teacher has recently resigned and will leave the school at the end of December 2014. The IEB has appointed one new teacher who will join the school on 1 January 2015. A temporary teacher, currently working at the school, will become a permanent member of staff from 1 January 2015. One member of the IEB has left. A former member of the IEB will rejoin the board on 1 January 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils are continuing to make better progress and standards are rising steadily. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, evidence from lesson observations and work in children's 'learning journeys' supports this positive picture. In 2014, an above-average proportion of children left Year Reception with skills that were in-line or above those expected for their age. This is a significant improvement on the previous year.

Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books show that pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making at least the progress they should. An increasing proportion of pupils are making good or better progress. Improved test results, at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2014, support this. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the proportion of pupils who made better than expected progress in writing was in-line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who made better than expected progress in mathematics was close to the national average. An above-average proportion of pupils reached the expected levels of attainment in mathematics and in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test. This was a significant improvement on the previous year.

However, the progress of pupils currently on roll remains variable across different classes and for different groups of pupils. For example, in Years 1 and 3, pupils do

not always make enough progress. This is due to continuing weaknesses in teaching and changes in teaching staff. Across the school, the progress of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is not accelerating rapidly enough in writing and mathematics. As a result, the gap between the attainment of these pupils and others is not closing quickly enough.

The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs continues to improve. This is because additional adults who work with these pupils are providing carefully targeted support. An increasing proportion of these pupils are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

School records show that teaching continues to improve. Most teachers are responding well to the support and coaching they receive from senior leaders and external consultants. However, further changes to teaching staff have hindered progress in this area. Teaching is not yet consistently good in all classes or across different subjects. Among the permanent teaching staff, there is a commitment to improvement and the atmosphere of professional learning continues to strengthen.

Teachers are getting better at providing work that closely matches pupils' different needs and abilities. Work in pupils' books confirms that more teachers are using questioning effectively, particularly in mathematics. This is helping teachers to ensure that pupils fully understand basic mathematical concepts before they move on to more challenging work. Despite this, in some classes, the most-able pupils are not always moved on to more challenging activities quickly enough. This hinders their progress in mathematics

Where learning was most effective, all pupils were challenged to think hard about their work and were clear about what they needed to do to succeed. For example, in Year 4 mathematics, pupils were exploring a range of possibilities involving money problems. Some pupils were challenged to work with problems involving pounds and pence. This activity successfully extended pupils' understanding of decimal notation and it encouraged pupils to choose appropriate ways to find their answers. Other pupils were working with whole number problems and using mathematical equipment to secure their knowledge and understanding of the number system. Teaching assistants worked effectively with a groups of pupils and ensured that they were well supported and challenged. As a result, pupils of all abilities made good progress.

Where learning was less effective, pupils spent too long listening to explanations about skills that they had already mastered. As a result, progress was slow. Work in some pupils' books shows that they spend too long completing writing tasks without a clear understanding of what they need to do to succeed. This slows their progress in writing.

Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils are not yet consistently good across all classes. Although all teachers provide 'fix-it' tasks, some comments do not provide clear enough guidance for pupils about how to improve their work. Teachers do not always make sure that pupils follow up the guidance and complete the 'fix-it' task set. Occasionally, when pupils are writing in different subjects, basic errors in letter formation and punctuation are left unaddressed over a long period of time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in and around school has continued to improve. School records are detailed and show improvements in pupils' behaviour over time. Pupils value the new playground equipment and the marked football pitches. They demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards the rota system that has been introduced. Pupils told inspectors that everyone 'sticks to the rules and shares the equipment and the football pitch fairly'. During the monitoring inspection, this was seen to be the case.

Parents and carers that spoke to inspectors were extremely supportive of the headteacher and staff. They said that they are kept well-informed about any changes. They feel that school is improving quickly. They were all positive about the way that the school manages pupils' behaviour. One parent said, 'I can come into the school at any time and there is always someone available. If there are problems, the school does something about it.'

Pupils told inspectors that they know who to go to if they feel worried about anything. They are confident that teachers will listen to them and take appropriate action. They said that they were not aware of any bullying issues. The new pupil E-Safety Council has further strengthened the school's work to keep pupils safe. Parents and carers value the recent presentation made to them by the pupils' E-Safety Council. Pupils show a good awareness of how to avoid risk when working on-line and what to do if they feel concerned.

School leaders have continued to work with parents to improve attendance. Attendance for 2013-2014 was above the national average. Systems for checking the attendance of different groups of pupils have improved. School records show that the gap between the attendance of those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding and other pupils narrowed during the summer term.

Leadership

The headteacher and other senior leaders have continued to provide a clear vision for the school. They are managing the challenges of staff turnover effectively and are relentless in their drive to improve the quality of teaching. They have introduced tailored support programmes for individual teachers where appropriate. As noted on the previous monitoring inspection, teachers have opportunities to learn from good and better teaching within the school. Effective links have been made with improving teaching programmes at a local teaching school. These actions are leading to steady improvements in the quality of teaching across the school.

Subject and senior leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. They provide staff with regular feedback following checks on their work. Written feedback to teachers does not always identify the precise actions that teachers should take to increase the progress of different groups of pupils. This means that any gaps between the attainment of different groups of pupils is not robustly checked.

As noted in the previous monitoring inspection, leaders carefully check and analyse the information related to the progress of individual pupils. However, leaders do not have the systems in place to easily check the progress of different groups of pupils from their relevant starting points. Additionally, they cannot easily check that any gaps between the attainment of different groups of pupils are closing. As a result, they are not using information about pupils' performance precisely enough to inform their actions.

The IEB continues to provide strong and effective support for senior leaders and staff. They are responsible for managing The Link Club which provides before-and-after school provision. The school's policy for the Link Club is out of date. The IEB is planning to review this and check that all procedures are in place and followed rigorously by all staff.

External support

The local authority continues to provide senior leaders and staff with effective support by tackling a range of issues related to the areas for improvement identified in the April 2013 inspection. Regular meetings from local authority representatives help school leaders to keep focused.

Priorities for further improvement

It is important that the issues that have come to light during this inspection, relating to leadership, are resolved promptly. Inspectors strongly recommend that leaders:

- present information about pupils' achievement clearly so that they can use this information to inform their actions and compare the school's performance with the requirements for 'good' achievement in the inspection handbook
- update the policy for the Link Club and organise an audit of provision to ensure that all procedures are in place and followed rigorously by all staff.