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Mr J Reynard
The Executive Headteacher
Annecy Catholic Primary School
Sutton Avenue
Seaford
East Sussex
BN25 4LF

Dear Mr Reynard

Special measures monitoring inspection of Annecy Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Gill Walley, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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. Newly qualified teachers may continue to be appointed after seeking approval from me.

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 Children's Services for East Sussex and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that it is at least good in order to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide pupils of different abilities with suitable work which builds systematically and effectively on their understanding of how to use and apply basic mathematical skills
 - work is planned which is sufficiently challenging for all pupils and children in Reception, especially the most able
 - pupils with low prior attainment are provided with suitable activities to help them improve their mathematical skills.
- Make sure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress by improving the quality of teaching, particularly at Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of the information gained about pupils' understanding during lessons to reshape and extend pupils' learning
 - the pace of learning in lessons keeps pupils interested and engaged
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can learn and of their behaviour in lessons
 - pupils supported through the pupil premium are given the support and challenge to enable them to achieve well and to close the gaps with their peers
 - teachers regularly show pupils how to tackle tasks successfully.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, at all levels by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders work together more cohesively as a team so that there is a strongly shared vision to drive and increase the pace of school improvement
 - swift and effective action is taken to eliminate inconsistencies in the information used by the school to check pupils' progress and to raise pupils' achievement
 - information about pupils' achievement is analysed more rigorously to check the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly those supported by the pupil premium
 - the governing body's understanding of how well pupils are doing and how well funding is being used is improved, so that they have a clear picture of where there are weaknesses in teaching, and are able to provide effective challenge to the school so that it improves. 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 governance may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, head of school, middle leaders, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. Eight lessons were observed, involving all classes in the school, four jointly with the executive headteacher. There were 10 shorter visits to lessons and two observations of small group support.

Context

There have been considerable changes in staffing since the previous visit. Some teachers joined the school in September and others returned from long periods of absence due to illness and maternity leave. The Chair of the Governing Body has resigned.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The quality of pupils' learning is better throughout the school. Pupils settle down to work quicker, and put more care and thought into what is asked of them. Previously weaker teaching means that some classes are still catching up on missed learning. Senior staff are well aware that there remains much to be done to ensure that all groups of pupils will have made the progress expected of them, and that an appropriate proportion will have made even better progress, by the time they leave they school.

As expected, the achievement of pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in summer 2014 was below expectations. A smaller proportion than average achieved at least a secure Level 2 in each of reading, writing and mathematics. Overall achievement in writing by the end of Key Stage 1 was significantly below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils achieved better than others, and their overall average point scores were near the national average. Only around a quarter of pupils achieved the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make) by the end of Year 1; in comparison, three quarters of pupils do so nationally.

At Key Stage 2, fewer pupils than average achieved Level 4 in each of reading, writing and mathematics, and the proportions of pupils achieving Level 5 in these subjects were particularly low. The proportion making the progress expected of them in mathematics was near the national average, but progress in both writing and reading was significantly weaker. Too few made better than expected progress in each of reading, writing and mathematics. Gaps in the achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers decreased in mathematics and also decreased, but remained too high, in reading. In writing, disadvantaged pupils performed significantly less well than other pupils.

Currently, achievement is improving. In Years 4, 5 and 6 it is improving rapidly in some areas. Writing remains a priority throughout the school, with standards in Years 2 and 3 still very low, but getting better. Writing is improving in Year 6, but more slowly than in reading and mathematics. Achievement in Reception is good, but there is room for more challenge around developing children's literacy and number skills. Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs continue to make faster progress now because of the better organised provision for their learning.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving. Activities within a lesson, and the changes from one activity to the next, are now managed much better. This means that there is more time for learning. Pupils are also taught how to approach tasks with more resilience; they are more confident about trying an idea out, making a mistake and learning from it. Many can now support their friends with the work, and gain in understanding themselves in the process. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the opportunities to discuss their work with their work partners.

There is considerable emphasis given in planning and marking to ensuring that pupils make satisfactory levels of progress. The quality of feedback has improved significantly and now gives a clear steer about how work may be refined and errors corrected and avoided in future. Pupils say they find this helpful. There is, however, still too little attention given to ensuring that a good proportion of pupils of all abilities make rapid progress in some pieces of work, and occasional surges forward in their learning.

Teachers are becoming better at gauging how well pupils are acquiring essential ideas, and are responding more quickly and with a wider range of strategies to meet individuals' needs. Expectations of pupils' achievements are rising in all year groups, and learning is now pacier in the majority of lessons as a result. However, there is still too little challenge for pupils of all abilities built in to lesson planning. For example, more able pupils are not given enough tasks which require a substantially more sophisticated approach and require the use of higher level skills. Pupils who struggle with the work are usually well supported and benefit from the attention of better trained teaching assistants who are now able to offer useful and appropriate challenge to their learning, as well as support. Practical equipment has been introduced in mathematics to support pupils to acquire a grasp of key mathematical ideas. In English, more could be done by teachers to break down writing challenges into smaller steps, to help pupils to produce high quality pieces of work. Sometimes good work is shared by projecting it onto the whiteboard to promote discussion, but there is still too little done to show pupils what very good work looks like.

Teachers now assess pupils' work accurately and reliably as a result of a system of internal checks, work with other schools and useful support from the local authority.

This is a significant step forward and enables teachers and subject leaders to plan lessons and target special support much more effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is better. This is a result of staff applying clearer policies more consistently and having higher expectations of pupils' conduct, and pupils enjoying the better teaching.

In lessons, the majority pay close attention to what is being said, and many are happy to contribute ideas and suggest answers. A small minority still seems to lose interest sometimes, and daydream. This is not always noticed and addressed. Instances of inappropriate behaviour are comparatively rare now: there have been no exclusions recently, and the introduction of break and lunchtime detentions has helped to tackle the few general behavioural issues successfully. Pupils say they like the new merit system of rewards for good behaviour and effort, because it recognises their personal efforts, and that it is helping the school to be a happier place.

Pupils still socialise, play happily and run around burning off excess energy at break and lunchtimes, but there is now a sense of order on the two playgrounds. No one is 'left out', and several simply enjoy chatting, or reading in the prayer garden. Staff on duty at these times are receiving training in how to manage behaviour, and are now exercising closer oversight of pupils' safety and welfare. Pupils themselves notice the difference and feel better looked after.

The welfare and safety of pupils remain a high priority for the school. All safeguarding checks around the appointment of new staff have been carried out thoroughly, and appropriate training is in place for new and current staff.

Pupils are also beginning to benefit from having their views heard more clearly, through the regular pastoral group meetings organised in mixed age groups and attended by all staff. These high quality conversations are starting to bring about improvements in the work of the school, including in break and lunchtime play equipment.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher continues to drive improvement very effectively. He is well supported by the head of school and the inclusion manager. Staff, parents, governors and pupils all demonstrated very high levels of confidence in his leadership, and associated directly it with the improvements evident in the school. Subject leaders have a better understanding of their role. Staff morale remains positive, and the school is a more resilient community now.

The school improvement plan has been rewritten recently to reflect improvements already brought about, and build-in emerging new priorities identified as a result of better monitoring procedures and better quality management information. It retains a good focus on the right priorities, gives a clear indication of what should be achieved in each key area at each point in the year, and includes good detail about monitoring and evaluation procedures. Senior staff regularly check on the successful implementation of these improvement strategies. The executive headteacher and head of school gather good quality information about pupils' progress, based as it now is on secure assessment information, and use it to identify groups and individuals who need more challenge or support. Some good planning has taken place with the local authority around the restructuring of phonics provision, but not all changes have been put in place yet.

Steps taken to improve the quality of teaching include joint work with teachers at Seaford Primary School, a concentration on teaching strategies at staff meetings, and a better shared understanding of what good practice looks like and its impact on learning. This work is effective. The quality of teaching is monitored closely by the executive headteacher and head of school. Not all subject leaders are playing an active enough role in this yet.

Governors have maintained close oversight of the work of the school. This is despite the recent loss of the Chair of the Governing Body. The Vice Chair of Governors has maintained stability in key aspects of their work, some restructuring has been undertaken, and governors' approach to monitoring has been rationalised. There is a wide range of useful expertise on the governing body, and governors are undertaking training to improve their capacity to support and challenge the leadership of the school. Progress is being made against the action plan governors drew up in response to the review of governance undertaken by the local authority.

The pace of change so far is satisfactory. Senior staff and governors are well aware that acceleration in the rate of improvement of provision, and in outcomes for pupils, is now possible.

External support

The local authority continues to offer good quality support for the work of the school, through the provision of specialist consultants in mathematics, English, and assessment, and very effective support for leadership and management. This support is very well coordinated, and the school has begun to take a strong lead in this. The amount of external support is beginning to diminish in response to the school's leaders' growing confidence in managing improvements for themselves. The local authority is continuing to work with the diocese to strengthen governance.

The diocese works closely with the local authority and the school and its representative attends all governing body meetings. It provides good support for

teaching and learning in religious education in the school and has ensured that assessments in this subject are accurate.

Links with other schools remain strong, particularly the executive headteacher's own school, Seaford Primary School. There is a healthy and vibrant exchange of ideas between the schools, and good support for the newly qualified member of staff. Links with St Mark's Church of England Primary, through the headteacher there who is a National Leader for Education, remain strong. Good development work has been undertaken on the use of assessment software, and curriculum developments. The school is now beginning to work much more closely and productively with the local cluster of schools, for example developing a response to the assessment requirements of the new National Curriculum. Developing links with South Downs Alliance, a wider association of schools in East Sussex, will give opportunities to attend training programmes.