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21 November 2014

Mrs Alixena Lubomski
Executive Headteacher
St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton
Gargrave Road
North Yorkshire
BD23 1PJ

Dear Ms Lubomski

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton

Following my visit with Gillian Wiles, Associate Inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 November, 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, Leeds Catholic Diocese and the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils in all subjects, especially those in Key Stage 1, to be challenged in their learning and reach their full potential by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - ensuring activities are planned to sustain pupils' enthusiasm and concentration and give rise to fewer opportunities for pupils to drift off-task and misbehave
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially when moving from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1
 - ensuring teachers take full account of what pupils already know and can do so that activities challenge them to reach their full potential
 - adapting the school's approach to the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) so that pupils learn new sounds quickly and are given books that allow them to put into practice what they have learned
 - providing high-quality professional development and training for staff on how pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop from year-to-year and to support and develop the skills of all teachers, especially those whose practice is not yet good
 - rapidly improving pupils' spelling, handwriting and the presentation of their work
 - ensuring pupils can recognise good or better writing so that they are motivated and encouraged to apply the same principles in their own work
 - sharing the best practice evident within the school more widely so that all teachers can learn from the best and improve their skills
 - addressing the inconsistencies evident in teachers' marking and feedback so that pupils more readily address their errors and misconceptions
 - ensuring that the activities children choose for themselves in the Early Years Foundation Stage are sufficiently challenging, especially for those who are most able, so that children make even more rapid progress in their learning and play.
- Improve behaviour and attendance so that they are at least good by ensuring that:
 - swift action is taken to implement the strategies and actions arising from the external review of behaviour and attendance
 - senior leaders review and evaluate the impact of actions already taken to improve behaviour, and make sure that the pupils' views are listened to and considered
 - all instances of reported bullying are followed up thoroughly and monitored closely to prevent them from reoccurring and to reassure pupils and parents.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and are able to fulfil them
 - taking swift and effective action to improve the quality of information used to check pupils' progress; analysing this information rigorously to provide an accurate assessment of the school's performance
 - reporting rigorously and robustly on the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium, and rapidly identifying individuals and groups of pupils at risk of underachievement
 - monitoring the performance of teachers in accordance with the *National Teachers' Standards*
 - checking the quality of teaching and learning more closely to ensure all staff meet the expected professional standards and are held to account for closing gaps in pupils' achievement
 - analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of school initiatives and the impact of the additional support provided to individuals and groups of pupils
 - ensuring governors provide robust challenge for leaders and carry out and commission their own checks rather than relying solely on the headteacher's view.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
- 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 19 – 20 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and senior leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and Leeds Catholic Diocese. Inspectors observed 13 lessons and scrutinised pupils' work and school documents.

Context

The headteacher is ill and absent from school. An executive headteacher from Sacred Heart Primary School joined the school in October and together with the assistant headteacher leads the school in the headteacher's absence. A Year 1 class teacher left in the summer and a Year 4 teacher is absent on maternity leave. Teachers are in place to cover these vacancies. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in October following the resignation of the previous Chair and three additional, experienced governors have joined the governing body. The number of pupils on the school roll has reduced to 209 since the last monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Children's attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the end of Key Stage 1 fell to below national averages in 2014. In September, more pupils began Year 3 without reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in summer 2014 compared to the previous year. School data show most pupils are making slow progress in mathematics, reading and writing in Key Stages 1 and 2. Underachievement remains widespread. The school is not analysing and monitoring the teaching and learning of groups of pupils rigorously enough to know when progress starts to slow. Consequently, leaders have been underprepared to tackle small issues quickly to prevent gaps in attainment from widening. For example, 20% of Year 2 pupils achieved their mathematics targets but the school has yet to determine what more they need to do to challenge and support these pupils to improve even further, and bring about faster improvement for the remaining 80% of pupils.

Standards in Year 6 improved in 2014 as a result of strong teaching and great efforts by pupils that enabled them to make significant progress in their final year. Results in the Year 1 phonics reading test also improved greatly in summer 2014.

Year 1 pupils are developing a better understanding of literacy and numeracy. For example, they are learning to recognise sounds and use strategies to support their reading. In lessons, good learning took place for some pupils when adults supported them, but was not sustained when pupils were required to continue on their own. Pupils who require additional support to catch up in mathematics, reading and writing are starting to receive it. In Years 1 and 2, pupils receiving this support are beginning to identify mistakes and self-correct their reading. The school has yet to

determine whether the resources they are investing in this work are helping pupils to close the gap on their peers.

The quality of teaching

Although there are pockets of stronger practice, a lack of consistency across teaching is leading to slower progress for pupils in most classes, including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Teachers are still getting to grips with changes and are starting to plan lessons to meet pupils' needs although their confidence and knowledge to adapt strategies are still developing. Teachers are sometimes reluctant to depart from their plans and lack sufficient confidence or subject knowledge to capitalise on pupils' unexpected answers. During lessons pupils' progress slows because learning is not checked effectively to ensure that tasks continue to be pitched precisely and to ensure that the level of challenge for each pupil remains just right to promote rapid progress. Effective learning takes place when clear guidance is given throughout lessons and criteria for success are shared with pupils from the outset. Pupils made faster progress in Year 2 and Year 6 classes when teachers regularly reviewed the learning taking place.

Teachers' expectations of pupils are rising: teachers are beginning to adapt their teaching of reading and writing in response to the training they have received. Tasks in lessons and in small support groups are usually explained well by teachers and teaching assistants. The presentation of written work and length of story writing is improving, but this does not yet extend to pupils' writing across all subjects. This is because guidance to pupils about what a good piece of work looks like is not identified enough in the majority of lessons across all key stages.

Pupils read appropriately challenging books regularly. Reading journals are not used consistently in Key Stage 1 and effective practice is not shared widely enough across the teaching team to ensure that all pupils make expected progress. In Reception and Years 1, 3 and 5, tasks gave pupils, especially the most able pupils, more work of the same level rather than providing opportunities to move their learning on. This had the effect of slowing or maintaining steady progress rather than increasing it. Procedures for marking are clear and understood by pupils. Pupils respond to spelling corrections due to a consistent focus on this aspect of writing across the school. However, feedback remains inconsistent because it does not always pinpoint exactly what pupils should do to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

'Look and listen' is the school's reminder for good behaviour for learning and this is becoming more consistent across the school. Older pupils say that lessons are more interesting but note 'really, really good learning starts when we listen'. Pupils are

motivated to read and present their work neatly. Pupils are eager to learn but the concentration and interest of younger pupils is not always sustained well due to slow transition between activities and tasks. Pupils are confused by the rewards and sanctions in the existing behaviour policy. Despite recent work during anti-bullying week, there is no system for analysing and evaluating bullying incidents to see what lessons can be learned. Consultation with governors, children and parents to develop a new behaviour policy is planned to begin shortly. Arrival and departure from school is well organised. The new arrival time, introduced at the start of the week is a positive step towards improving punctuality. Absence is monitored daily and, although overall attendance has been sustained since the inspection, it is not analysed well enough to help the school to focus its efforts to best effect.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Weaknesses in strategic leadership, until very recently, have delayed the school in moving forward. Since the start of term senior leaders are starting to take greater responsibility for supporting teachers. Through the training that has been arranged, staff are starting to develop their teaching of reading and are responsive and keen to improve. Development of subject leadership is at very early stages; the school has been slow to ensure that these leaders know their role in improving reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders, including the pupil premium champion, are keen to get to grips with new roles introduced since the start of term but have yet to take a firm lead in driving improvement in their areas of responsibility.

Systems for checking the quality of the school's work remain underdeveloped since the last monitoring inspection. Too little observation of teaching is taking place and it is not focused closely enough on pupils' learning in order to identify the barriers that slow progress. Senior leaders are not focusing their lesson observations or work scrutiny on the progress of specific groups of pupils.

The executive headteacher has quickly set about strengthening the quality of teaching. Revised systems for the performance management of staff are sharper: measures for judging teachers' impact on the achievement of different groups of pupils are clearer. Teachers welcome the greater accountability and direction that they are starting to receive and staff morale is improving. Governors have high expectations for pupils and staff. They are beginning to implement recommendations from external reviews of governance and use of the pupil premium funding. They are increasingly challenging the pace of improvement. In response to the questioning and probing that has taken place, governors have a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaker features within the school. Governors are finding external reports more helpful than those produced internally in identifying progress and where further actions are needed.

External support

The local authority has provided regular support to the school and recognised prior to the recent inspection that the leadership required support. However, the support has not moved the school forward at an acceptable rate. The current Educational Development Adviser has a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished and her reports and training are enabling governors to begin to evaluate progress objectively. Effective work between the local authority, Leeds Catholic diocese and Sacred Heart Primary School successfully helped the school to secure additional support for leadership during a critical period. Specialist local authority advice and diocese support are helping governors to make informed decisions about continuing staffing and finance issues.