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12 December 2014

Miss Liza Davies
Interim Headteacher
The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School
Kingsland Gardens
Kingsthorpe
Northampton
NN2 7BH

Dear Miss Davies

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10–11 December 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 no more than two newly qualified teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2, with no more than one of these being appointed to work in either 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 Interim Executive Board, the Diocesan Board of Education for the Diocese of Northampton, and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies, free schools, UTCs and studio schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead and team inspectors.

Annex

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

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and make it consistently good by ensuring that:
 - pupils understand where their learning is taking them
 - lesson activities interest pupils and inspire them to do their best
 - teachers use questioning effectively to make pupils think hard.

- Raise achievement in Key Stage 2 by making sure that:
 - work in mathematics is not too hard but demanding enough for pupils to make rapid progress particularly the more-able pupils
 - pupils have plenty of opportunities to write at length in different subjects
 - all subjects are taught in sufficient depth to develop pupils' key skills.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that:
 - newly qualified teachers have all the support they need to improve teaching rapidly
 - teaching assistants have the skills to make a difference when supporting pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium
 - key stage phase leaders have a good understanding of the progress of pupils in their areas and are held to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' performance
 - the roles of senior leaders are clear to all staff and lines of communication are well known
 - all parents have confidence in the school
 - the new governing body strengthens its capacity to hold the school to account, especially in making sure there is sufficient relevant expertise on the 'school committee.

Ofsted has made recommendations on actions for governance to the authority responsible for the school. This will include an external review of governance.

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 10–11 December 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and met with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the newly formed Interim Executive Board (IEB), and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the diocese. The inspector spoke formally to a group of pupils in Year 6, and informally with pupils from other year groups. Informal conversations were held with parents and carers on the playground to gather their views, and responses from a school questionnaire to parents and carers were analysed. The inspector observed pupils in each class while they were learning. All of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior members of staff. The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including leaders' documents to monitor the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement data, work in pupils' books, and the single central register of staff suitability checks. The inspection focused on all of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the school's last inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the David Ross Educational Trust, a proposed partner for the St. Bonaventure Trust, has withdrawn its offer to become part of the proposed academy. This has delayed the original intention for the school to become a sponsored academy from January 2015. The St. Bonaventure Trust continues to seek a new partner sponsor.

The Standards Improvement Board, in place at the time of the last monitoring visit, has been dissolved, and a new interim executive board (IEB) has been formed very recently.

A new interim headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2014. One of the previous joint acting headteachers has become the school's substantive deputy headteacher. The other has left the school. A new head of teaching and learning has been appointed to work across the federation of local schools. However, she is currently based at the school on a full-time basis to provide support. The executive headteacher has continued to work at the school. However, his contract comes to a close at the end of December 2014, and he will return to his own school.

Since the last monitoring visit, five teachers have left the school. School leaders have experienced difficulties in recruiting new permanent teachers. However, five new long-term temporary teachers have been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school now meets the government's floor standards (which set out the minimum expected attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Year 6). The latest data

for 2014 show that different groups of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 achieved much higher standards than in the previous year. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined was broadly in line with the national average. However, boys did not make enough progress in developing writing skills during their time between Year 2 and Year 6. Similarly, pupils attaining the higher reading levels at the end of Key Stage 1 did not make enough progress between Years 2 and 6.

Outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2014 were less favourable, with pupils' attainment overall being well below average for their age, particularly in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Year 1, improved from the school's 2013 figure but remains below the national average. The improvement masks weak performance from pupils supported through pupil premium funding (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils), as only one out of six of these pupils reached the expected standard. Leaders are ensuring that these pupils are now receiving effective additional support to help them to catch up with their peers.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the last academic year did not make as much progress as they should have done. A lower proportion of children than the national figure left the Reception class with skills in literacy and mathematics that were at the expected level for their age.

Work in pupils' books, and school tracking data, show that different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those supported through the pupil premium, are beginning to make better progress in most year groups. Consequently, standards are rising. There are some exceptions, where progress remains slower than it should be. This is particularly the case in Year 3 for boys in writing and mathematics, and for pupils supported through the pupil premium. Across the school, pupils demonstrate weaknesses in their mental calculation skills in mathematics, particularly when trying to solve problems. Older pupils are not able to recall multiplication facts rapidly. At times, this slows their learning. Pupils in Year 6 also have gaps in their learning about, and understanding of, time.

The quality of teaching

There is evidence that the quality of teaching is beginning to improve in Key Stages 1 and 2, and that pupils are beginning to make better progress. Following effective external support, and internal monitoring, the majority of teachers are using assessment effectively in Key Stages 1 and 2 to check pupils' understanding and pitch work at the right level for pupils. However, this is not consistently the case. For example, in one lesson during the inspection, a group of more-able pupils was asked to solve problems about time, which involved converting minutes into hours. They found this too difficult and the inspector found that they could not yet securely read

simple times from an analogue clock. The teacher had planned an activity which was not at the right level for the pupils and they failed to make any progress as a result.

The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is beginning to improve. However, there is a heavy reliance on external leadership support in this phase. The quality of the indoor and outdoor learning environments has improved significantly since the last inspection; once again, following effective external support. The quality of teachers' assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not good enough. Teachers are not using assessment effectively enough to check the impact of their work on children's progress and to identify the next steps of learning that children need to take. Learning journals lack evidence about the progress children have made in each of the areas of learning. However, more recently, following external advice, teachers have begun to improve this. Assessments at the end of the last academic year, and the beginning of the current academic year, were externally moderated by the local authority to ensure their accuracy.

Teachers' expectations of the quantity of writing that pupils can produce are sometimes too low, particularly in Key Stage 2. For example, it can often take children too long to get started with their writing at the beginning of lessons. As a result, they make slower progress in practising and developing their skills. Pupils are given more frequent opportunities to write at length, including a weekly piece of extended writing in their 'independent writing books'. However, opportunities to write in some subjects, particularly science, are still too limited.

Due to inadequate teaching in the past, gaps remain in pupils' learning. Teachers often use questioning effectively to check pupils' learning and to extend their thinking, particularly in Key Stage 1 classes. However, on some occasions, opportunities are missed to check and clarify pupils' understanding, particularly in Key Stage 2. It is essential that teachers' questioning is of a consistently high standard in Key Stage 2 to support the identification of gaps in pupils' learning.

Teachers' marking is effective and is making a strong impact in most classes on helping to engage pupils in learning and in beginning to accelerate their progress. Teachers identify clear next steps of learning, usually provide concise and useful guidance, and give pupils time to respond to their comments.

Teaching assistants are being used to their strengths and areas of expertise increasingly well. They often make a strong contribution to learning in lessons. However, on some occasions, they 'overteach' and do not allow pupils the space to fully show what they can do before they choose to intervene.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the monitoring visit, pupils were observed behaving well in lessons and in different areas of the school. Pupils commented that, on the whole, this was a typical picture. They reported that the behaviour management system implemented

in September 2014 has helped them to understand more clearly the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

Pupils report that they enjoy coming to school, and most show good attitudes to learning. Their attendance is broadly in line with the national average and is improving as the term progresses. However, it remains slightly below the same period last year. Leaders have identified that work needs to be carried out to improve the punctuality of a small group of pupils. The impact of this work will be checked at the next monitoring visit.

Pupils move safely around the school building and in playground areas. They commented that behaviour and safety on the playground has improved since structured playground games were introduced for them to participate in. Older pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of safety, including how to stay safe when using the internet.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Despite a number of changes to the composition of the school's leadership team, and uncertainty about arrangements for the school's transition to academy status, school leaders have remained fully focused on the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. Staff have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders.

Leaders have found it very difficult to recruit new teachers, and have employed a number of temporary staff to help overcome this. Leaders have ensured that temporary staff have been deployed on a long-term basis to support continuity for pupils. They ensure that temporary staff receive the same guidance, support and training as other staff.

The interim headteacher has quickly won the respect of many parents and carers, who report that she has brought much-needed stability. She has played important roles in implementing the school's new marking policy, and helping to ensure that teaching assistants are deployed to their strengths across the school. She has been effectively supported to settle into her new role by the executive headteacher.

The newly appointed head of teaching and learning has worked effectively to begin to improve the quality of teaching. She has led other leaders in conducting comprehensive monitoring to identify how each teacher can improve their work. She has then used this information to coach teachers to help them to improve. This approach has demonstrated a positive impact, particularly in the way that teachers use assessment to ensure that lessons are pitched at the right level for pupils of different abilities in Key Stages 1 and 2.

A combination of effective external support, and internal support from senior leaders, is ensuring that the school's middle leadership team is growing in

confidence, expertise and influence. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and have begun to implement detailed action plans to drive improvement. This is helping to ensure that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching. The leader for mathematics has identified that pupils' calculation skills are not as well developed as they should be, and is finalising a whole-school calculation policy. The impact of this will be checked at the next monitoring visit. The leader for disabilities and special educational needs has made good headway in amending the school's register of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She rightly recognised that a number of pupils had been placed on the register in the past because they were not making enough progress, due to weak teaching, rather than because of a specific need. The number of pupils on the register has almost halved since the beginning of the academic year.

There are early indications that pupils supported through the pupil premium are beginning to make better progress as a result of the school's work. An external review of pupil premium expenditure has taken place. As a result, school leaders are now measuring in increased depth the impact of pupil premium funding. They are also spending pupil premium funding more innovatively; for example, by encouraging parents and carers to help identify how a proportion of their child's pupil premium funding could be best spent. The provision of a summer school to help develop the basic skills of pupils supported through the pupil premium was well received by pupils and parents and carers.

The interim executive board was formed very recently but the roles of members have swiftly been identified to help ensure that they are able to fully utilise their skills and work to their strengths. The leadership responsibilities of each member have been balanced carefully to allow sufficient focus on holding leaders to account, and also on the management of the school's transition to academy status. The experienced Chair of the Interim Executive Board has very rapidly built up a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The impact of the newly formed interim executive board will be checked as part of the next monitoring visit.

Informal discussions with parents and carers during the inspection, and responses to the school's questionnaire to parents and carers in November 2014, indicate that parents and carers feel more positive about the school than previously. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about the high proportion of temporary staff employed at the school. The inspection found that most temporary members of staff are receiving good support from leaders and most are performing as well as other teachers as a result.

Leaders have ensured that the school environment has become much tidier and clutter-free since the last monitoring visit. This helps to promote a better sense of purpose and organisation in the school, and ensures that resources for learning are more accessible in classrooms.

The school's single central record of staff suitability checks meets government requirements.

External support

The local authority has provided good support to the school since the last monitoring visit. A review of the school's work in October 2014 played a pivotal role in helping to ensure that leaders were more effectively deployed to drive improvements to the quality of teaching. The local authority has also brokered an effective link to a local school, identified for its strong practice, to help improve the quality of teaching, and a link to a local headteacher, to help improve systems of leadership. Both of these links have made a strong and positive impact. The local authority organised an audit of the school's finances, which uncovered no issues of concern. After a period of intensive support, the local authority has agreed to now pull back its level of support to see how effectively the school's leaders can perform for themselves.

A representative from the diocese has ensured the representation of the diocese at leadership meetings, to contribute ideas to help to decide the school's future direction.