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5 February 2015

Mrs Natalie Tomlinson  
Headteacher  
St Chad's CE Primary School  
Gladstone Street  
Winsford  
Cheshire  
CW7 4AT

Dear Mrs Tomlinson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Chad's CE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 February 2015, 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 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 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 Strategic Director of Children's Services for Cheshire West and Chester.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching to good or better in order to raise standards and ensure pupils make at least good achievement by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - making sure all teachers have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are doing in lessons and build on what they can already do by setting work which provides the right level of challenge
  - making sure teachers' planning promotes the development of pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects
  - improving marking so that teachers provide helpful next steps for pupils and that they act upon the guidance to improve their work
  - ensuring that pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding have their learning needs met well
  - making sure all teachers have high expectations about how pupils behave in lessons to ensure learning time is not lost
  - teachers ensuring that pupils concentrate and listen carefully to their instructions and guidance so that they know how to learn well
  - providing a wider range of learning activities in the outdoor area of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
  
- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels including governance, so that the school improves quickly by:
  - ensuring that pupils' progress is checked closely to identify pupils who are not doing well enough and taking swift action to help them catch up quickly
  - ensuring that school leaders at all levels rigorously check on the quality of teaching and learning and take decisive action to bring about improvements where needed
  - making sure leaders, including governors, make better use of the pupil premium funding to boost the progress and attainment of those pupils eligible for support
  - ensuring that plans for improving the school identify the key priorities, have specific targets and a clear series of actions that are checked regularly to ensure the school is moving forward
  - strengthening the ability of governors to hold the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' achievement
  - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 February 2015**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the inclusion manager and the family welfare coordinator. I also met with a large group of subject leaders, five governors, a group of seven parents, a group of eight pupils and the diocesan and the local authority representative. Several more governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, joined us for the final meeting. I visited classrooms, scrutinised pupils' books and talked to pupils about their work. I looked at minutes of governing body minutes, the self-evaluation document, tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and bullying incidents and your records of the assessment of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection in October, the school has appointed a teacher to lead mathematics. During the autumn term the deputy headteacher was absent for five weeks due to surgery. Also, the school experienced significant emergency building works which meant that classes had to be housed in shared areas and one class, a distance away from the school, in the local church hall.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Excitement characterises the learning of the children in the Reception class. Children were engrossed in their teachers' instructions as the 'pirate' made his appearance resulting in laughter and giggles. Through this session children used speaking and listening skills very well to ask the pirate 'who, what, why and how' to frame their sensible questions. Children swiftly turned their attention to watching their teacher write the questions on the whiteboard and use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help 'Miss' spell the words. All children concentrated hard and took delight in learning. Children then moved on to more independent activities including the much improved outside area, delighting in dressing up as pirates and making a ship together. Staff know that there are yet more activities which can be added to the outside area so children have ample chances to read, write and count.

Positive relationship between staff and pupils lead to friendly classrooms where pupils respond to praise and feel valued. Pupils understand the purpose of learning, 'to get a good job', and have faith that their teachers will help and support them to achieve. Pupils are willing to concentrate so that they can learn and get better at the subjects they enjoy studying. Pupils I spoke to were proud of their topic books and explained with enthusiasm the homework activities, linked to their topics, which they

now receive. They appreciate that their efforts from home are displayed around the school. This gives pupils a secure sense of belonging to the school.

In mathematics pupils are encouraged to solve problems by reasoning and explaining and older pupils confidently engage in this type of activity. For example, in a Year 6 class where pupils were investigating factors and multiples, they were given time to discuss the common factors of shaded numbers in a table before explaining their answer to each other. They systematically worked through a set of questions to solve the problems and made good progress. The most able pupils responded well when I asked them to think of a question they could pose to each other about the table and pupils would benefit from more opportunities to extend learning in this way. Across the school pupils are encouraged to use correct mathematical terms when discussing their work. However, not all pupils are challenged and are not always given work which encourages them to think deeply. Limited resources for mathematics slows learning for some pupils. Gaps in pupils' recall of multiplication facts also hinder their learning as they do not have the information needed quickly enough to solve problems. The school recognises that mental mathematics needs to improve and have taken action to do so.

Pupils enjoy reading and many younger pupils, in Years 1 and 2, are becoming fluent and read with expression. In several guided reading sessions many pupils were engaged in activities which enabled them to practise their reading skills. However, other activities, such as low-level comprehension, did not stretch some pupils' understanding of the text.

Opportunities for pupils to write at length are growing, especially for older pupils. Using good quality stories or poems to engage attention, pupils are encouraged to find features of different types of writing in English lessons and use this knowledge when writing about different subjects. For example, a Year 5 pupil wrote an extended poem based on her study of *Beowulf*, her learning of rhyming words and the structure of poetry. In Year 3, pupils cheered when they were told that they could use dictionaries to look for the meaning of words; however, not all pupils had the skill to find the word quickly.

Checks on pupils' attainment in October now provide the baseline from which progress can be measured. Senior leaders have taken steps to make sure that this information is accurate and provides a secure picture of pupils' achievement as the school moves forward. Checks on progress at the end of the autumn term showed some variability on the progress pupils were making. The most recent check, available for Year 6 and Year 2 only, shows that pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Senior leaders recognise that swifter progress can be expected from all pupils so that rapid learning becomes the custom in all classes, so that gaps in learning close and pupils can reach higher standards.

Pupils' workbooks are neat and work is well presented. Pupils are trying hard, with some success, to improve their handwriting. Books show that pupils of all ability levels are expected to work hard and progress is improving.

### **The quality of teaching**

Whole-school and bespoke professional training has been enthusiastically received by teachers and teaching assistants leading to a team of staff who want to provide the very best for pupils. They are self-reflective individuals identifying how they can improve their practice and pupils' learning. Teachers are more confident at assessing the level at which the pupils they teach are working through talking to each other about pupils' work and through the local authority checking their judgements. Senior leaders know that this needs to continue to ensure teachers are fully competent at assessing pupils' work. This knowledge has led teachers to have higher expectations of pupils and set work which is better matched to the level the pupils are working at. Despite this improvement there are a few cases where that match is still not quite right for the most able pupils.

Staff use the agreed behaviour management system consistently so that pupils know what the expectations for behaviour are and know how their teachers will deal with any interruptions to learning. I observed this system in several classes where, for example, pupils were reminded not to shout out or talk when a friend was talking.

The variety in marking noted at the last monitoring inspection still remains. Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and congratulate them on their efforts. Throughout the school there are examples of a teacher starting a dialogue with pupils, for example asking them to apply their knowledge to a different problem in mathematics or trying to find a more exciting word to use in their writing. However, marking does not always link to the pupils' target.

Teaching assistants contribute much to pupils' learning and this is a strength. During this inspection I observed teaching assistants working with groups and individual pupils providing high-quality support through asking questions, giving time for the pupils to 'have a go' and then giving clues and modelling new vocabulary.

Despite improvements in the quality of practice in lessons, there is still some work to be done to ensure all teachers provide the precise teaching modelled by a few teachers so that gaps in pupils' learning can be swiftly diagnosed and closed. It would be valuable for senior leaders to use the strong practice evident in the school to model and coach specific aspects of practice.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are polite and welcoming, standing aside to allow me to walk through a doorway first and asking if I was having a good day. They have definite views about

the school and, on the whole, are satisfied. Pupils talked about the work of the school council and how it had managed to change the dinners so they are tastier now; and how they have plans to purchase play equipment for the break times. This would improve pupils' experience of playtime and support their social development. Pupils get on well, as observed on the playground, devising games to keep themselves occupied or walking around in twos or threes chatting. Behaviour around the school and in classrooms, as noted at the last monitoring inspection, has vastly improved. Pupils say that behaviour is much better than a year ago. Pupils help each other and look after each other, for example the Year 6 pupils take responsibility for the Reception children at break time. Parents I spoke with agreed that behaviour has improved; several commenting on how proud they are that their children attend St Chad's. Notably they felt that communication is much better and they feel comfortable discussing their child's needs with leaders and teachers.

Through an array of strategies, pupils are attending more often and the improvement noted at the last inspection is sustained. This is due to rigorous checking of absences and follow up so that parents are supported in getting their children to school and on time.

Behaviour and bullying incidents are diligently recorded so that senior leaders know which pupils need support. The inclusion leader checks for trends of incidents but acknowledges that this information can be followed through more profitably to identify specific pupils or groups of pupils who can be even better supported. Attendance rates are similarly recorded and checked for all groups of pupils.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and inclusion manager provide a tight-knit leadership team with the sole aim of improving provision for pupils. Each member brings complementary skills so that decisions are taken for the benefit of the pupils. They have the full commitment of the rest of the staff in their quest to move the school forward and want pupils to make good progress. It is timely for staff to review what they consider to be good progress for the pupils at St Chad's so that there is clear expectation from all involved. Senior leaders, often with a local authority consultant, monitor the quality of teaching through observing practice and tell teachers the strengths of the lesson and development points. It would support improved practice if this development point was included in the focus at the next observation. A central tool to this improvement is the school action plan which guides their work and enables governors to plot the progress the school is making on its journey. This plan is RAG rated (allocated red, amber, and green depending on the stage of progress) and it may be worthwhile displaying this document in a central place so that all involved can celebrate success and see what action needs to be taken next.

The new method of leading subjects mentioned in the last report is at an early stage. Each member of a team is corporately responsible for the improvement of a range of subjects and aspects. All involved are enthusiastic and committed to making these groups work. Within these teams a few leaders have already experienced monitoring and checking activities; for example checking teachers' planning and arranging themed days. However, there is still some work to be done to ensure that each subject team contributes to improved teaching and learning in each subject. It would be useful for members of the leadership team to model the skills and techniques for successful middle leadership, such as scrutiny of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and asking pupils their views of that particular subject.

The mathematics leader has only recently assumed responsibility for mathematics and has received some training for this role. It is vital that she receives support to enable her to start to support and challenge colleagues swiftly to strengthen practice in delivering this subject.

Governance is much stronger; members present as a corporate body. Through well-chosen appointments, a review of their functions with a National Leader of Governance and an audit of skills, members are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are in no doubt how much has been achieved but under no illusion that there is still work to do. They have started to build up their own knowledge of the school through a variety of methods and so be in an even stronger position to hold leaders to account for their decisions.

The school has come a long way in the past 12 months on its improvement journey. Much has been achieved: creating a vision for long-term success, establishing a team of staff committed to that vision, improvement of behaviour, teaching and pupils' achievement; and promoting positive partnerships with the pre-school and the parents. It is time now to take stock and prepare solidly for the next part of the journey.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided very effective support for the school and the governing body. The headteacher is very appreciative of this support. The School Improvement Officer has organised support from consultants which has strengthened senior leaders' expertise in checking the quality of teaching and gauging the achievement of pupils. The school is at a stage where such support could be reviewed so that senior leaders take full responsibility for monitoring activities. The headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body are held accountable for the rate of progress the school is making by senior officers at the local authority.