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Mrs Jane Chambers
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Springfield Road
Wigan
WN6 7RH

Dear Mrs Chambers

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with, Joan Williamson, Associate Inspector to your school on 10 and 11 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 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, the Director of Children and Families for Wigan and the Director of Education for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so that it leads to pupils making at least good progress and raises standards for all pupils, especially the most able pupils, those with special educational needs, and disadvantaged pupils, as well as improving their attitudes to their work by:
 - making sure that basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in number use, spelling, punctuation and grammar, are built on from the beginning of Key Stage 1 and are practised in subjects across the school
 - ensuring that teachers know and teach a range of subjects well, using their subject knowledge and knowledge of pupils' learning to plan work for pupils that matches their abilities and their interests
 - deploying teaching assistants effectively by making sure they are clear about what they are expected to do to meet pupils' specific learning needs
 - using accurate and reliable assessment information to help support and target all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils, to make up for any gaps in their knowledge and skills
 - ensuring that day-to-day marking clearly guides pupils in their next steps of learning and checks on improvements in their work
 - ensuring that teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and set work that challenges and engages all groups of pupils in their learning in order to eradicate low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - making sure that weaknesses in teaching are eradicated and that leaders' evaluations of teaching over time through observations of lessons, reviews of pupils' work in their books and checks on pupils' progress, are accurate and include all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that all staff work to realise the school's challenging targets, basing these on accurate assessment information, so that all pupils make at least good progress and reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, especially those with special educational needs, the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that pupils' work is checked systematically and accurately by staff and leaders so that any under-achievement can be acted upon and more challenging targets then set for those who achieve their targets
 - raising the levels of staff attendance
 - ensuring that the governing body is knowledgeable about the school's performance and challenges its effectiveness.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the senior leadership team, middle leaders, the teaching staff, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors, a representative from the local authority and a representative of the Archdiocese. Inspectors observed teaching in all the classes in the school. The school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central record, were checked.

Context

The school is in the process of appointing a substantive headteacher to start in September. One teaching assistant has joined the school since the last monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Senior leaders now meet with teachers, every half term, to discuss pupils' progress and attainment. This enables teachers to set more appropriate targets with the pupils to help them improve their writing and mathematics. Targets are shared with parents and information evenings have been offered by the school to encourage parents to support their children's learning at home.

The school has introduced new mathematics and literacy programmes which enable teachers to have more confidence about judging pupils' progress based on their starting points. The programmes offer a more consistent structure for teachers to plan lessons to meet the needs of the pupils. Pupils' basic skills in using number, spelling, punctuation and grammar are regularly practised through the introduction of these programmes. These recent developments are not sufficiently embedded across the school to evaluate their impact on pupils' achievement. However, some early signs indicate that pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. The new mathematics programme is starting to have a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes and attainment. The impact of the new writing programme has yet to be sufficiently reflected in improved attainment.

Not enough accurate information is currently available for leaders to make accurate judgements about some groups of students' achievement. The school is offering extra support in mathematics for the most able group of pupils in Year 6 and for pupils who need to resit the national phonics screening test in Year 2. However, the most effective means of support for some pupils has not yet been identified and put in place to ensure any gaps in pupils' learning are plugged. Not enough pupils are receiving sufficiently targeted support to enable them to overcome their barriers to

learning so they can catch up more quickly and make better progress. Consequently, achievement remains inadequate at this stage.

The quality of teaching

Staff training has focused on teachers' assessment of pupils' work and using that information to set appropriate targets for pupils. Training has raised teachers' awareness of their responsibility for the achievement of all the pupils in their class. There has been a strong focus on developing writing and mathematics skills. The topics covered in training are monitored by the leadership team but teachers are not formally reflecting on how the training is improving their teaching and the learning of the pupils.

Pupils' achievement is central to how the quality of teaching is measured in the school. Formal and informal lesson observations, along with the scrutiny of pupils' books, analysis of pupils' achievement during progress meetings and the review of teachers' planning are all used to judge the quality of the teaching and to focus further training and support where they are needed. Leaders have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and most staff are responding positively to the increased responsibility and accountability expected of them. Not enough teaching is yet consistently good enough to significantly improve achievement across the school.

Teachers have embraced the literacy and mathematics programmes. They appear more confident in planning and delivering lessons that engage the pupils more actively in their learning. Inspectors saw pupils singing and dancing their times tables and answering rapid calculation questions. Pupils are encouraged to have a go, even if they get something wrong. The marking policy has been revised and staff are expected to apply this consistently so that pupils learn from errors and any misconceptions are tackled promptly. Some staff are not consistently checking for misconceptions or identifying the gaps in learning; consequently, some pupils are making insufficient progress and some are not engaging well enough in their learning.

The role of teaching assistants is not always clear in every lesson; this makes it difficult to assess their impact on pupils' progress and attainment. The plan to involve teaching assistants in pupil progress meetings should enable the impact of their role to be clarified.

Staff attendance has improved. As a result, there is greater consistency for the pupils and staff are able to identify and act upon any underachievement by pupils in their class in a more timely manner.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils talk confidently about their progress and show a pride in their work books. Inspectors observed very good attitudes to learning in some classes, but not in all.

This lack of consistency reflects the quality of teaching and classroom management experienced by the pupils. When pupils are actively engaged and the work is pitched at the right level pupils' attitudes are more positive. Staff do not always recognise when a pupil is off-task because they are struggling with the work. Strategies to check pupils' conceptual understanding, rather than just checking they have completed a task, are not used widely or consistently enough to help pupils learn.

Pupils whose attendance falls below 85% are monitored by the family support worker. Those whose attendance is above 85% but below 90% are less well monitored. The community police and prison team recently worked with pupils and staff to present an 'actions have consequences' assembly and workshops to raise pupils' awareness of where to go when they need help and to understand the importance of law and order. The number of fixed-term exclusions has decreased since the start of the year. Pupils and parents take pride in celebration assemblies and are encouraged to value positive personal qualities as well as achievement. Pupils are polite and helpful to others in class and in the playground.

The school has good links with other professional agencies and follows up concerns about pupils diligently to keep pupils safe and secure.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The senior leadership team and middle leaders have continued their focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school through specific English and mathematics action plans as well as the whole-school and special educational needs action plans. Although the plans are targeting the right areas, the impact of the actions completed so far have not resulted in significantly improving the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement. The next analysis of pupils' progress is due in the next few weeks and leaders predict that a marked improvement will be seen at this stage. Performance management targets are more tightly linked to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and these are also due to be reviewed before the end of term. Both evaluations should give a much clearer picture of the impact of the actions taken by the school to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Consequently, the school will be better able to update and amend its action plans appropriately.

Since the last monitoring visit the governing body has finalised its action plan and is in the process of reconstitution. New governors will be mentored so they quickly understand the school and the scope of their role as governors. The vision and values of the school were shared with applicants for the headteacher's post to ensure the long-term vision of the school is sustained. Governors are better informed about performance data and therefore more able to ask appropriate questions to hold leaders to account regarding pupils' achievement. Governors reported back to the full governing body about three focused visits they made to the school this term to learn more about data, finance and to monitor the application of certain policies. The governing body arranges budget, admissions and assessment

meetings to coincide with strategic school dates so they have up-to-date information for their meetings. Middle leaders report to the governing body about progress in their subject areas so that governors are better informed about the work of the school.

The school has a number of different action plans but not all have clear time-constrained actions and identified responsibilities to enable priorities to be agreed and evaluated in a timely manner.

The school's website is non-compliant with the Department for Education expectations because essential information is missing about the curriculum, the pupil premium funding, and the impact of the sports funding. Many aspects of the website are out of date or misleading; leaders and governors have been aware of this for some time. As a result, not all the recommendations from the pupil premium review have been completed: the allocation of the funding for 2014/15 has not been specified.

External support

The local authority continues to provide appropriate support to the school during its journey out of special measures.