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20 March 2015

Kerrie Lewis  
Acting Headteacher  
Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School  
New Park Road, Castlefields  
Shrewsbury, SY1 2SP

Dear Mrs Lewis

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18–19 March 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 July 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 Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire and the Director of Schools for Shrewsbury Catholic Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, making sure that pupils make consistently good progress through the school, and pupils who operate above the level expected for their age continue to do so, by ensuring that:
  - pupils who are eligible for the government’s additional funding (pupil premium) catch up with, or exceed, the standards reached by their classmates
  - teachers plan activities that build on pupils’ prior knowledge
  - teachers provide systematic opportunities for pupils to practise skills that they have learnt recently
  - teachers and support staff set more ambitious learning targets for pupils to aim for
  - additional adults are used more effectively to support pupils’ learning during lessons
  - teachers use all possible opportunities to encourage pupils to read for themselves during their work in lessons.
  
- Improve leadership and management so that:
  - checks on the progress of pupils, and the performance of staff, are accurate and robust
  - the school’s own reviews of its progress are more accurate and lead to effective improvement of the school
  - plans and policies for reading, writing and mathematics are implemented so that the quality of teaching in each class is good
  - leaders check regularly and often that staff training is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching across the school
  - school leaders check that pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (pupil premium) in all classes, perform as well as, or better than, their classmates.
  
- Improve governance by ensuring that:
  - the governing body plays a much more active role in monitoring the performance of the school
  - all governors understand their roles in order to fulfil their statutory responsibility to promote high standards in educational achievement
  - the governing body checks the extent to which pupil premium funding is used to raise achievement for eligible pupils.

A full, focused, external review of governance should be undertaken, to build on the recommendations of the previous review 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 18–19 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work and visited parts of lessons, some of which were undertaken jointly with the acting headteacher. The inspector held meetings with the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher, three members of the recently constituted interim executive board (IEB) and one of the local authority's school improvement advisers. The inspector spoke to pupils during lessons and at lunchtime, and met with a group of pupils in Year 6 to hear them read, discuss their work, their views about the school and the behaviour and safety of pupils. The inspector took account of parents' views and checked how well they are being informed about the school's progress, having spoken to some parents and carers at the start and end of one inspection day. Improvement plans were considered to gauge the impact of actions taken since the last monitoring inspection in November 2014. Assessment data setting out pupils' attainment and progress were scrutinised. The single central record was checked to ensure that all new staff have been added and that the school complies with statutory requirements in relation to vetting and disclosure.

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher who led the school at the time of the previous monitoring inspection in November 2014 left at the end of February 2015. The local authority and Shrewsbury Diocese appointed an acting headteacher from another primary school to take charge until a permanent appointment is made. Two class teachers left recently and have been temporarily replaced with supply teachers. The local authority, in cooperation with the full support of the diocese, exercised its powers of intervention to disband the governing body and replace it with an interim executive board (IEB). The IEB has recently constituted, with the approval of the Department for Education. The IEB will shortly be convening its first formal meeting. Two permanent teachers have recently been appointed and will be joining the school in April 2015. The early years (Reception) class is being taught by a temporary teacher while the permanent teacher is on family leave.

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

Increasingly accurate assessments of pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics currently point to improvement compared with last year's disappointing national test results. Standards in English and mathematics are currently in line with last year's national average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Despite the instability of staffing and the use of temporary staff to cover for permanent teachers, achievement is improving reasonably well. The school continues to meet the

government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.

In a short time, the acting headteacher has, rightly, prioritised pupils' application of extended writing as an area for improvement. Inspection findings show that the quality, form and structure of pupils' writing are improving. However, in some classes, the most-able pupils should be writing more extended pieces of work independently and more often. Standards in mathematics are improving and an increasing proportion of pupils are on course to make or exceed the expected rate of progress in relation to their starting points at Year 1 (for Key Stage 1) and Year 3 (for Key Stage 2). However, in both English and mathematics, lessons do not always extend or challenge the most-able pupils enough.

The legacy of some inadequate teaching or that which requires improvement in the past left some groups of pupils and individuals behind and with a lot of ground to catch up. Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, which in this school is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority, were, on average, a term behind other pupils in English and mathematics in Year 6 last year. The gap was wider than this in Year 2 for reading and writing. Inspection findings, assessments and pupils' work show that the gap is narrowing in some classes, especially where the teaching is consistently good or where the tasks set are more demanding for pupils. There is, however, still more to be done to narrow these gaps further.

Pupils who have additional learning needs benefit from some well-focused support and intervention. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make reasonable progress towards reaching age-related levels in English and mathematics and some are making good progress. Nonetheless, there are still instances where these pupils underachieve in lessons that do not challenge or support them sufficiently.

### **The quality of teaching**

Most lesson plans include details about pupils' expected learning targets but there remain lessons where teachers and support staff do not extend or move pupils' learning on quickly enough to help them reach higher levels. This is typically the case for the most-able pupils because teachers do not leave sufficient time for them to work on one of the higher-level learning objectives planned for each lesson.

In the lessons where learning is most effective, questioning is sharply focused and pupils are given time to think for themselves. Where learning requires improvement, the pace and challenge provided are insufficient so that pupils mark time or go over work that they have already covered. In such lessons, teachers ask leading questions that do not enable pupils to think deeply enough to extend their understanding.

Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length but workbooks show inconsistent expectations for the quantity of work expected of pupils. Teachers' marking has improved in pupils' writing books but less so in mathematics. Although teachers are starting to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics, and provide more varied and challenging problem-solving tasks, the most-able pupils should still be doing better. A scrutiny of teachers' marking in a sample of mathematics workbooks shows some good practice but this is not yet a common feature, reflecting inconsistencies that remain in the teaching across the school. There are still lessons and work provided for pupils that do not offer the right level of challenge for those who have the potential to reach or exceed the levels expected for their age in mathematics.

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

On the whole, pupils enjoy school and behave well. This is reflected in rising attendance rates and very low levels of persistent absenteeism. Pupils are keen to do well and are usually well behaved and attentive in lessons and at other times around the school. The only lapses of concentration occur when teachers or teaching assistants do not expect enough of pupils or repeat what has already been learned. This sometimes results in fidgety or less productive learning and behaviour.

The overall improvements to pupils' behaviour and learning in most lessons, as well as the increased engagement with pupils through improved marking in writing books, are starting to raise expectations. Workbooks are tidy, well presented and demonstrate that pupils are proud of their efforts and try hard to do their best.

Pupils are safe and there are good routines for keeping them safe, including vigilant supervision of pupils during break and lunchtimes. Pupils are courteous to each other and to visitors, and they treat resources and the school environment with care.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection in November 2014, there have been significant and necessary changes to the school's leadership and governance. The diocese and local authority have made important decisions to address the significant weaknesses that existed in both the leadership of the school and its governance. These shortcomings were reported at the time of the school's full inspection in July 2014 that placed it in special measures, and the inadequacies in school improvement planning were reported at the time of the previous monitoring inspection in November 2014.

The acting headteacher's appointment has brought some stability and introduced fresh ideas that are rightly focusing on improving teaching and raising standards. She comes with a strong track record as she is also headteacher of another

successful primary school. Reviews and assessments of pupils' progress and teachers' performance are now, rightly, being given higher priority than previously. Their oversight and scrutiny are now becoming more systematic and better organised.

Parents are not concerned about the changes to staffing and leadership and have already noticed some of the improvements being made to the school. The acting headteacher has already made herself accessible and known to parents and is a visible and proactive leader with the determination to be successful for the benefit of pupils and the school community. The recent permanent teaching appointments have the potential to add further stability.

The acting headteacher has already done a great deal in a short time to sort out assessment information and challenge what were previously some inaccurate evaluations of pupils' progress and performance. The target-setting process has been overhauled and both senior leaders (the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher) are raising the bar by providing more ambitious learning targets for pupils to aim for. There has already been a review of teachers' marking and this is becoming increasingly consistent, especially in pupils' writing books. The acting headteacher has also reviewed staff roles and responsibilities, including those of teaching assistants, to make sure that they are deployed more effectively to support pupils' learning.

The acting headteacher has identified accurately where improvements are most needed and is already implementing effective plans to secure these improvements. These emerging priorities are rightly focusing on improving teaching in all classes and raising expectations. Given the time spent on addressing difficult staffing issues, and changes to leadership and governance, leaders recognise that the school still does not have an effective improvement plan, as reported in November 2014. As a matter of urgency, leaders must now provide a much sharper and systematic plan that will guide the school on a sustained course of improvement to standards and teaching.

The staff plan a range of activities and sessions that encourage pupils to be healthy and active. Every pupil in Key Stage 2 is provided with the opportunity to learn to swim. In addition, the school uses the primary school sports fund well to contribute to the cost of physical education and sports sessions run by specialist coaches from a local community trust associated with a local professional football club.

### **External support**

Following the prompt and decisive actions of the diocese and local authority since the last monitoring inspection in November 2014, leaders are acting with more urgency and are determined to turn things around. They recognise that what was being done in the past did not work and was not having enough impact on

improving teaching, pupils' achievement and governance. The local authority's School Improvement Adviser and the Director of Schools for the Shrewsbury Catholic Diocese have been proactive and effective in identifying and are addressing the underlying weaknesses in the school's leadership and governance.