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11 December 2014

Mr A Livingstone
The Interim Headteacher
Stansted Church of England Primary School
Malthouse Road
Stansted, Sevenoaks
Kent, TN15 7PH

Dear Mr Livingstone

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stansted Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2013. 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.

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 Diocese of Rochester and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically good or better through the school by:
 - making teachers' explanations shorter and sharper so pupils can get down to work more quickly
 - ensuring that those pupils who are capable of harder work start more challenging activities earlier in the lesson
 - giving pupils more options in deciding how to complete the tasks set for them
 - planning activities in the Reception class that really stretch children, stimulate them to learn without direct adult support and motivate them to persist with an activity.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - taking concerted action to ensure the effective long-term leadership and management of the school
 - ensuring that senior leaders have the necessary skills needed to drive improvements without the need for significant external support
 - ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders and subject coordinators are clear, manageable and effective
 - making sure that routines to involve staff in monitoring and developing the quality of teaching are implemented as soon as possible
 - ensuring that the proposed external review of governance takes place as soon as possible to assess how the governing body can contribute to improving the school's effectiveness.

- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring that pupils write longer pieces of work, particularly those who are capable of higher levels
 - giving pupils more guidance on how to spell accurately and to write creatively
 - making sure that pupils' writing in other subjects is presented more carefully and completed to as high a standard as in English
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills within day-to-day activities and other subjects
 - ensuring pupils have more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 December 2014

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, five members of the interim executive board (IEB), representatives from the local authority and the diocese. I visited all classes and several teaching groups, discussed reading with a group of Year 3 boys, attended an assembly and looked at the pupils' work.

Context

The number of pupils on roll has fallen and there are now 35 pupils on roll. Staffing has altered accordingly. A full-time teacher and a teaching assistant joined the school in September. A part-time finance officer and a part-time office administrator have replaced the full-time office manager. A teacher is employed for one day each week with the younger pupils. The school no longer employs a music teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Care has to be taken when looking at the results of national tests because of the very small numbers of pupils involved. Last year children in Reception did not do as well as they should. This group are making better progress in Year 1. There is very little evidence that the current group of children in Reception are making reasonable progress.

More positively, there was a sharp rise in the numbers of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 who achieved the expected level in the phonic screening check. This checks pupils' ability to use their knowledge of sounds and letters to decode individual words. The end of Key Stage 1 test results were disappointing and there was a drop in reading which suggests that, although the pupils are learning to decode words, they are not able to use this skill to understand the meaning of texts. Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics remained well below average at the end of Key Stage 1. Consequently, pupils joined Key Stage 2 in September with a great deal of catch up needed to make sure they achieve as well as they should. Although standards overall remained below average at the end of Key Stage 2 last year, there was improvement, particularly in mathematics. All groups of pupils made reasonable progress from very low starting points and made up more ground in the latter part of the year.

The school's most recent checks on reading, writing and mathematics skills took place in October and show that pupils have made reasonable progress, especially in Years 1 and 2. Work in these pupils' books confirms that many are making appropriate progress in all subjects. The work in Key Stage 2 pupils' books does not show the same progress. Although their mathematics work is better, particularly for the Years 5 and 6 pupils, the quality is often poor and the content is minimal in most

subjects other than mathematics and English. There is little evidence that the work is planned to cater for the very wide range of ages and abilities. There are too few examples of longer pieces of writing, and the quality of writing in other subjects is not at the same standard as that in the English books.

The pupils readily use tablet computers in lessons to research information. In a Years 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils enjoyed finding out the costs of items in online catalogues and used the information to solve mathematical problems. However, there is little evidence in the books of this sort of real life learning in mathematics. The presentation of pupils' work varies considerably. There is an improvement in handwriting in some books and in the adults' modelling of writing, but this varies in style.

The quality of teaching

During this visit, the quality of teaching varied considerably and this is reflected in the pupils' books which show that teaching over time also varies from good to inadequate. Teachers are struggling with the wide range of ages and abilities in each group, and this particularly affects Key Stage 2 and Reception children. It is particularly noticeable when all of the Key Stage 2 pupils are together in the afternoons. Pupils' progress is hampered by lengthy introductions, which happen not only in the afternoon but in some of the morning sessions as well. These introductions cover the same ground for all, leaving insufficient opportunity for pupils to work on activities suitable for their age or ability. As a result, those who could get on quickly and learn in more depth do not have sufficient opportunity. Activities are not always well matched to the abilities of the pupils. They are often too easy, but sometimes too difficult.

The school has adopted a scheme of work which outlines the sessions for the teaching of early reading. These sessions are usually well taught, but there are some difficulties because, although the ability of pupils might be similar, there can be a three- or four-year age gap which affects the suitability of the teaching style or activity. Activities suitable for a four-year-old are not necessarily suitable for a seven-year-old. The teaching of reading for fluency and understanding is not good enough to help those pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, who have the most ground to make up.

The provision for Reception children continues to be inadequate, with few opportunities for them to explore activities and learn without constant adult support and direction. The Reception classroom and outdoor area are not set up well enough to enable them to explore different areas of learning independently. The quality of display in other learning spaces across the school is also limited. For example, there is little evidence of relevant vocabulary or ideas in any subject that pupils can use to support their learning. There is too little evidence of pupils being

given real choice about how they will use and apply their knowledge to new learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are safe in school. They are friendly, eager to please and keen to learn when they are given suitable opportunities. The only low-level poor behaviour seen during this visit occurred when pupils were bored or confused. Their ability to develop persistence, use their initiative and take responsibility for their learning is restricted by the opportunities provided. They generally enjoy school, although the Year 3 boys said they hated missing other subjects like art and physical education when they had to do extra reading or spelling. Attendance is about average

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim headteacher and the special needs coordinator continue to manage the day-to-day running of the school effectively, so that it is safe and well ordered. Levels of supervision in class, at playtime and lunchtimes are high and the pupils are well cared for. The monitoring of teaching and learning has increased this year in as much as all teaching groups have been observed. Pupils' books are not checked rigorously enough to make sure that work is at the right level and different subjects are covered appropriately. Although the scrutiny of English books identified that there is not enough extended writing, action to remedy this has not been quick enough. Leaders are not evaluating rigorously the impact of additional support and intervention work to make sure that it is bringing about sufficiently rapid improvement. A revised curriculum and assessment arrangements have been introduced this academic year, but there is an urgent need to ensure that all pupils are learning about different subjects in the breadth and depth appropriate to their age. Senior leaders' judgements about how well the school is doing are over generous.

It has taken a long time to establish an improvement plan with sufficiently measurable targets and milestones. The IEB is well established now and, with the improvement plan in place, is increasingly able to hold school leaders to account and measure improvement. Board members carry out regular monitoring visits and rigorously check that safeguarding arrangements are secure. They are systematically reviewing the school's policies and ensuring that these are up to date. They have produced a pay policy, but this has not yet been agreed by staff. A member of the IEB carried out a thorough evaluation of the school's website and identified that it does not meet statutory requirements. The IEB has requested that school leaders take action to ensure that the necessary information is published on the website. This has not yet happened and the website continues to be underdeveloped, out of date and lacks important information. The IEB is carrying out risk assessments on the viability and financial security of the school.

External support

Difficulties remain over the school's acceptance of and the value that the interim headteacher places on external support and challenge. The local authority continues to provide regular support, including a series of joint lesson observations with the interim headteacher. Regular progress and impact meetings take place and are informed by the fortnightly adviser visits. The dispute between the school and the local authority over last year's writing results has not been resolved. An adviser from the diocese has worked with the school on the improvement plan so that this is now fit for purpose. The school also works with a group of local schools and the starting points of Reception pupils have been moderated across the schools.