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23 April 2015

Duncan Reed
Acting Headteacher
St Christopher's CEVCP School
Bellflower Crescent
Red Lodge
Bury St Edmunds
IP28 8XQ

Dear Mr Reed

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Christopher's CEVCP School

Following my visit with Lynn Lowery, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21–22 April 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 October 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 not making enough 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's Services for Suffolk County Council and to the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
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)
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that the overall quality is at least good by ensuring that:
 - work is set at the right level of difficulty for all pupils, including the most able
 - teachers check carefully on pupils' learning and move them on quickly if they understand, or give extra support if it is needed
 - feedback helps pupils to understand how they can improve
 - teaching interests pupils so that they work hard, stay on task and do not disrupt their own learning or that of others.
- Raise pupils' attainment and improve their progress so that standards are at least in line with national averages by the end of Key Stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - assessments made by all teacher of pupils' work are accurate
 - all staff have the knowledge necessary to teach writing and mathematics effectively
 - teachers have high expectations regarding the quality of presentation and the standards pupils can reach in writing
 - girls are challenged to make good progress in mathematics
 - the impact of the extra support given to pupils who have special educational needs, and to those eligible for the pupil premium, is measured carefully, and that changes are made quickly when necessary.
- Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - safeguarding procedures are tightly adhered to and all necessary risk assessments are in place
 - senior leaders concentrate on improving teaching, learning and achievement
 - systems are in place to plan and check on the school's work so that the most urgent priorities are identified and tackled quickly, and staff and governors know how and when progress will be monitored
 - all leaders use information about pupils' progress to monitor the quality of teaching and provide teachers with additional support where necessary so that they improve
 - pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe by understanding the different types of bullying, knowing what to do if it occurs
 - the newly structured governing body are quickly trained so that they can check the school's work more effectively and hold leaders to account for the rapid improvements required.

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 21–22 April 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and other leaders, groups of pupils, and members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority on the telephone. The school's single central record and other documentation about safeguarding were checked.

Context

The deputy headteacher is currently acting in the role of headteacher during the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher. Since the first monitoring visit, a sponsor has been found and the school expects to become an academy, sponsored by the National Education Trust, on 1 September 2015. Four classes are currently being taught by long-term supply teachers, covering three teaching vacancies and the long-term absence of a teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school now uses a self-devised spreadsheet to track pupils' progress, having switched from the commercial software package it had previously used. It is unclear whether or not this allows the school to interrogate its data adequately. No data on pupils' progress was provided during the inspection because the school considers previous assessment data to be unreliable. It is therefore impossible to gauge whether or not pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points.

The school's data show that attainment is not good enough and remains inconsistent across the school. Based on assessments at the end of the spring term, pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are likely to attain levels well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of their relative key stages this year.

The attainment of disadvantaged pupils is not good enough. The school's data show that disadvantaged pupils are well behind their peers in school and other pupils nationally. For example, in Year 6, disadvantaged pupils are currently about two years behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics and about a year behind in writing.

The work in pupils' books is of variable quality and too much of it is poorly presented and shows little care. Although some improvement is evident after pupils' 'fresh start' page in their books, this is minimal and has not been sustained. Although good progress is evident in some pupils' books, this is not the norm and too many pupils' books show little sign of improvement.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching in the school is improving but this is not happening quickly enough. The school's work in this area has been hindered both by difficulties in recruiting teachers and by a particularly virulent infection that affected staffing during the second half of the spring term.

Leaders have focused on improving the quality of teachers' planning and this is slowly beginning to have an impact on how well lessons are taught. Some teaching is interesting and engaging but this is not consistently the case. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously but feedback is frequently very limited in helping pupils to improve their work. For example, teachers tend to mark exclusively to the learning objective of the lesson and fail to pull children up on their simple, and sometimes careless, errors in punctuation and spelling. This means that standards are not high enough and many pupils get away with a slapdash approach to their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Good relationships are evident throughout the school, both between pupils and their classmates and between pupils and staff. As a result, behaviour is usually good around the school and pupils get on well together. However, pupils' learning is affected by the low-level disruption that is prevalent in classrooms throughout the school. Behaviour, such as talking while the teacher is speaking, is commonplace and limits pupils' ability to listen and to concentrate. In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils stated very clearly that this is the only aspect of the school that they are unhappy with; they know that the poor behaviour of some pupils in their classes affects how well everybody does. It is crucial that the school addresses this issue as a matter of urgency.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The quality of leadership and management has improved. The inclusion coordinator has focused her work on improving provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She has provided and arranged training for teaching assistants and this is helping to improve their practice.

The teaching and learning lead has focused his work on improving the quality of teaching in the school. Although staff sickness has slowed the pace of improvement, it is clear that his work is having a very positive impact. It is vital that the school plans well for how this work will be continued when the teaching and learning lead's contract finishes at the end of this academic year.

Although monitoring of how the pupil premium grant is spent is improving, it is still not rigorous enough. It is unclear how the way the money is spent improves the

progress and attainment of the individual pupils it is intended to support. Data provided by the school is misleading because all pupils eligible for the pupil premium are grouped together. This means that the better attainment of the school's many service children masks the poorer attainment of those that are disadvantaged. This means that the school's leaders are unaware of the true picture in terms of the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils. It also means that governors are unable to hold the school fully to account.

The acting headteacher appears to be more confident in his role and clearly has a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, despite support from the local authority and prior suggestions from the monitoring inspector, he was unable to supply a complete action plan for inspectors to assess during the inspection.

Safeguarding arrangements are now much stronger and are continuing to improve. The school business manager has ensured that recruitment processes are now more rigorous and that procedures are followed closely. Two additional leaders have now been trained to support the acting headteacher in his designated safeguarding role, and this has strengthened the quality of leadership in this area.

The governing body is becoming a much more effective and cohesive group. It is better organised, and responsibilities are now distributed across a wider range of governors. Following the review of governance, governors have written their own action plan and are making good progress towards achieving its aims.

External support

The local authority provides good support to the school and monitors its progress closely. Local authority advisers are working with the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics, and this is beginning to have an impact. The local authority has carried out a two-day review of provision and also a 'no-notice' safeguarding audit. Both reviews were detailed and thorough, and have provided the school with useful points for further development.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that pupils' progress is not held back by their own or others' behaviour, by:
 - dealing effectively with low-level disruption that occurs in lessons
 - improving pupils' attitudes to learning.