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14 May 2015

Mrs T Cross  
Headteacher  
St White's Primary School  
St White's Road  
Cinderford  
GL14 3DH

Dear Mrs Cross

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

Following my visit with Jennie Cutler, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 May 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 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 Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**  
**Annex**

## **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring:
  - teachers use the information they hold on pupils to plan learning activities that are not too easy or too difficult for the different groups in their classes, especially the more able and those with special educational needs
  - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve, especially the more able
  - pupils are provided with clear guidance on what they are expected to know, understand and be able to do in a single lesson or series of lessons
  - teachers mark work so that pupils know what and how to improve and have opportunities to respond to marking quickly.
  
- Ensure that all groups of pupils consistently make good progress and attain more highly in English and mathematics across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 by:
  - improving pupils' basic skills in mathematics by giving them more chances to apply those skills and to use them in other subjects
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to write in different styles in other subject areas to develop and widen their skills in writing
  - ensuring that the progress made by pupils eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is faster and any gaps in their skills and understanding are closed more quickly.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - ensuring that school leaders at all levels use the information they hold on how well different groups of pupils are doing to compare their progress and intervene where appropriate
  - producing school development plans that identify clearly and specifically how improvements are to be achieved, who is going to monitor the actions and how the impact of the actions is to be assessed
  - developing middle leaders further so that they can effectively review the quality of teaching and learning and use their skills to coach other teachers by modelling good and outstanding teaching
  - ensuring the governing body holds the school rigorously to account by monitoring the impact of actions aimed at raising the achievement of different groups of pupils such as those eligible for pupil premium funding.

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

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 May 2015**

## **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised relevant documents. Inspectors also met with the headteacher and other members of staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. In addition, inspectors also met a small number of parents. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with the school's external adviser and a second representative from the local authority.

## **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the acting headteacher has been appointed as the school's substantive headteacher. The governing body has approved the school's revised staffing structure and advertised for a deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher. The governors also plan to interview and appoint three teachers for September 2015.

The inclusion leader is currently absent from school and one teacher is on maternity leave. Two other classes are being taught by temporary teachers.

The construction of the new school is on schedule to be completed by February 2016. As part of this building project, the school will increase in size next year to 11 classes.

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

Children in the Reception Year do well and make good progress. Over the last year, the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has been strengthened and this has improved children's early reading skills. In addition, the recently introduced handwriting policy has been implemented successfully across the school, including the Reception Year. This approach helps the Reception children to recognise the correct letter shape and formation as they practise letter sounds during phonics lessons.

There is a strong focus on improving pupils' achievement and teachers are increasingly knowledgeable about pupils' progress. As a result, teachers are using this information to plan activities that are enabling pupils to reach higher standards than in previous years.

As a result of the recent improvement work, pupils are being supported to develop their literacy and numeracy skills at a faster rate than last year. In most mathematics lessons, pupils are given good opportunities to use practical equipment, which helps them to consolidate their learning. In English, pupils are challenged to learn new spellings and thereby strengthen the quality of their writing.

Senior leaders track pupils' development carefully. The leaders' analysis of data shows that standards will be higher than last year. Their analysis also shows that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are doing well and that the gap between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and that of others is narrower than previously. The evidence seen in pupils' workbooks supports this increasingly positive picture.

### **The quality of teaching**

There is a strong and appropriate focus on strengthening the quality of teaching. To improve the consistency of teaching, leaders have introduced new policies that set out appropriately high expectations. Although these policies are helping to support the school's work they are not yet embedded sufficiently to show an impact on the work in every class.

Teachers' planning is detailed and builds on pupils' prior learning. The activities planned for each class are often matched appropriately to pupils' different abilities. As a result, most pupils find the work suitably challenging, which helps them to make good progress. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not provide sufficient practical resources to support pupils' learning, which hinders their progress.

Teachers' expectations of pupils are not uniformly high enough. Planned activities are relevant and engage pupils' attention but the work they produce is often poorly presented, which indicates a lack of care and pride. In addition, activities often limit pupils' ability to think and plan for themselves.

Most teachers mark pupils' books carefully and provide guidance about how to improve their work, but this is not consistent across the school. In addition, teachers' comments are not always written neatly, making it difficult for pupils to read. Consequently, some of the marking's effectiveness is lost as pupils do not act on the advice given.

Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the school's work and the quality of teaching. They play an integral role in lessons, often supporting individual or groups of pupils. They know pupils well and, when working with groups of pupils, ask relevant questions that help to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.

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

Pupils are proud of their school. They talk confidently about how it has improved over the past year. They enjoy school and are keen to attend. This positive attitude is apparent in the decreasing number of pupils arriving late for school. It is also demonstrated by the improving rate of attendance, which is now only slightly below the national average. The school is continuing to encourage high levels of attendance and staff are working with those families whose children have high rates of absenteeism. The school's information shows that those pupils with low attendance levels do not make the progress expected of pupils of a similar age

nationally. When they do attend school they do well but, because of their frequent absence, there are some significant gaps in their learning, which impacts negatively on their achievement.

To promote the school's positive behaviour policy, leaders have worked intensely with a small number of pupils who had routinely failed to work within the school's boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

During the monitoring inspection, although the majority of pupils displayed positive attitudes and were keen to engage in lessons, a few did not. When this was the case, the noise level in those classes impeded learning as teachers frequently stopped their lesson to remind pupils to work quietly.

Pupils are supervised very well as they move around the school. Road safety is taken very seriously because of the road that pupils have to cross as they move between the two sites. The most recent initiative involved pupils working with Gloucestershire Police to promote road safety. As a result of the school's work, pupils are knowledgeable about the importance of road safety.

The mid-day supervisors make a strong contribution to pupils' positive behaviour and help them to play together successfully. They know the pupils well and regularly organise, and join in, playground games, which the pupils enjoy.

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

The headteacher is providing the strong leadership needed to implement the school's improvement priorities. She knows the school very well and has focused on strengthening the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. She leads by example and displays the very high standards needed to ensure the school's future success. She works closely with the governing body to agree and monitor the detailed improvement plan, which sets out the actions being taken to strengthen the school's effectiveness.

The decision to review the staffing structure has laid firm foundations for the next stage of the school's development. This is an important milestone as the leaders plan for an increasing number of pupils at the school. The decision has also provided staff with additional leadership opportunities as new posts of responsibility are being created in readiness for the new school year.

To manage the relatively high levels of staff absence, the school has employed temporary teachers. As a consequence, the rate of progress being made to improve the quality of teaching has slowed. However, to support those new to the school, the Key Stage 2 leader has taken action to run workshops that promote the school's procedures and high expectations. This approach demonstrates good initiative and is a reflection of the strong determination that exists within the school to bring about the improvements identified.

The middle leaders are making a significant contribution to the school's improvement work. They support the headteacher well and are increasingly taking a lead in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in their area of responsibility. They are also increasingly challenging their colleagues to have higher expectations of pupils' performance.

The leadership team work together very well. Between them, they have taken responsibility for ensuring that the leadership of pupils with special educational needs is managed successfully. They have been supported well by the local authority's advisers who have provided expertise and guidance. As a result, the school's capacity to manage special educational needs successfully has increased significantly since the last monitoring inspection.

The Chair of the Governing Body continues to provide the leadership needed to support the school. He is a strong advocate and champion of the school. Working with his colleagues on the governing body, he has led the recruitment of new governors so that currently there is just one vacancy to fill. The new governors were provided with a planned induction programme, which ensured their swift integration into the governing body.

The governing body is proactive in monitoring the school's work. It receives detailed information via the headteacher's reports and from presentations delivered by subject leaders. In addition, governors have taken the opportunity to visit the school regularly and gather first-hand evidence. The minutes of recent governing body meetings provide strong evidence of governors challenging the senior leaders so that they can ascertain the impact of the school's improvement priorities.

### **External support**

The local authority makes a strong contribution to the school's improvement work. Since the school was judged to require special measures, the local authority advisers have provided significant guidance and expertise. They have participated in the recruitment process for the post of substantive headteacher and will do so again for the appointment of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher.

Advisers from the local authority visit the school regularly to work with individual staff members, which has helped to improve the quality of teaching. They also monitor the school's performance regularly and provide the governing body with detailed reports about the progress being achieved. In addition, they have interviewed teachers with leadership responsibilities to provide challenge and support.

The governing body also benefits from the local authority's expertise. The Chair of the Governing Body makes good use of the specialist advice to ensure that decisions are sound.

The school also benefits significantly from support provided by the external adviser, who works closely with the headteacher to discuss and review the progress being made.