

Tribal
Kings Orchard, One Queen
Street, Bristol
BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com



11 June 2015

Ms Jo Warnock
The Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
St John's Place
Canterbury
CT1 1BD

Dear Ms Warnock

Special measures monitoring inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Julie Sackett, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 June 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 February 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 Kent and the Diocese of Canterbury.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - improving teachers' behaviour management to ensure that pupils behave well and pay attention in lessons, and that more lesson time is devoted to helping pupils learn
 - ensuring teachers have higher expectations of pupils, to retain their interest and raise their achievement
 - focusing on improving pupils' basic skills, especially in mathematics, and building on what pupils already know to make sure that work is set at the right level for them
 - improving the teaching of phonics, ensuring that pupils practise their sounds regularly, that they are heard reading more often and that pupils' reading records show parents and carers their children's phonics targets
 - making sure that teachers' marking gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, and their ability to use more interesting vocabulary when writing
 - identifying the most-able pupils' skills early and ensuring they have regular opportunities for higher level work, including in mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils' reading tasks across all subjects are matched to their abilities
 - providing additional support to raise the achievement of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium.
- Improve pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality by:
 - effectively tackling and reducing incidents of poor behaviour and the number of exclusions
 - ensuring that teachers consistently implement the behaviour policy, and that senior leaders and governors closely monitor its impact
 - implementing robust procedures and working closely with families to raise attendance rapidly and to improve punctuality.
- Improve the skills of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, by:
 - reviewing the leadership structure, clarifying roles and developing the skills of senior and middle leaders so that they take a full part in improving teaching and pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that teachers are provided with well-judged training leading to good subject knowledge, in order that their teaching of English and mathematics becomes consistently effective

- ensuring that the school improvement plan gives more subject-specific actions for improving English and mathematics, showing how actions will be checked and judged, and who will be responsible for them
- improving performance management systems to ensure that teachers' pay is linked to their performance ensuring that members of the governing body receive training backed up with detailed and accurate information about the school's performance so they are better able to challenge school leaders.

An external review of governance, including 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, all members of the interim executive board (IEB), a representative from the local authority and another from the diocese. Inspectors attended an assembly, had lunch with the pupils, observed the teaching and learning in all classes and looked at the work in pupils' books.

Context

The school has been relatively stable since the last visit. One teacher left at Easter and another teacher joined the school. Significant change is planned for the next academic year, with the move to full-time nursery provision and two classes in every year group. Experienced teachers have been appointed and all posts are filled.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards continue to rise. Throughout the school, pupils' knowledge and skills, particularly in reading and mathematics, are higher than in previous years. Improvements in the achievement of the youngest pupils, which were noted at the previous visit, have been sustained. There is an increase of 10% in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected skills for their age by the end of Reception. This rise could have been much greater, and would have nudged close to the national average, but there is a weakness in writing which has restricted the overall improvement. In Year 1, a greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard in the phonic screening which checks their knowledge of letters and sounds. These pupils are enthusiastic readers and readily use their knowledge to read unfamiliar words. At the end of Key Stage 1 there is also an upward trend and a significant increase in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills compared with last year. In reading and mathematics, the proportions of pupils achieving the standards expected for their age are almost in line with the national average and almost a quarter of the most able pupils have achieved the higher level. There has been an improvement in writing, but it is not as evident as in the other subjects.

Although there has been an improvement in Key Stage 2, the rate of improvement is more variable. The results of all of national assessments have not been received yet, but the school's checks show that there have been significant improvements, particularly in reading and mathematics, compared with previous years. The writing assessments have been moderated and there is a rise of 20% in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level. Nonetheless, standards are still well below average and, although the proportions of pupils that make the expected amount of progress over the key stage have also risen, too few make the progress expected.

The school has introduced a new method of assessing how well pupils are achieving in line with the revised curriculum and national changes. This highlights the whole school weakness in writing and also underlines the variability in progress between classes. In some classes it is very clear that the rate of progress is speeding up, but this is not the case in every class. This variability is also evident in the pupils' books. In one of the Reception classes, children's writing skills are developing very well, so that the quality and length of their writing outstrip that of much older children. This shows that, with good teaching and well planned opportunities, pupils can, and do, achieve well. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate that they can tackle work more independently when they are given the opportunities to do so. However, there are still too many instances when constant adult intervention prevents them from developing important learning skills such as confidence, self-reliance and perseverance.

The achievement of pupils with special educational needs was of great concern. The provision for these pupils has been very carefully reviewed and revised. It is still early to see whether this is making a significant difference, but the signs are promising. On the whole, disadvantaged pupils make the same rates of progress as other pupils. However, their attainment is lower so they need to make faster progress to catch up with their classmates.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching and learning is strong in the early years, where the lead teacher provides particularly valuable expertise. Elsewhere, there is no inadequate practice and the quality of teaching is improving, but not quickly enough to ensure that pupils catch up and achieve as well as they should. There are noticeable improvements in some classes, with clearer aims for each lesson, a better match of work to meet the different abilities of the pupils and more opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning. The approach to teaching reading has been revised and this is making a positive difference, particularly in the younger classes.

Classrooms and corridors are used well to provide useful displays which both celebrate and support learning. All teachers plan carefully. Many lessons are lively and interesting, with good use of different resources, so that pupils are more enthusiastic about their learning. The adults try to make sure there is sufficient support and challenge for all pupils. This is still something that needs further attention, particularly for the least and the most able pupils. It continues to be the case that too often the adults do not expect, or give, the pupils the opportunity to complete enough work. Some adults continue to intervene too much and this stifles the pupils' ability to get on with their work. Chances are missed for pupils to demonstrate what they already know and then for adults to build on this rather than jumping in too quickly. The impact of this is most noticeable in writing and is resulting in pupils making too little progress in developing their writing skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve. Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. The number of incidents of poor behaviour and fixed term exclusions continues to fall as the quality of teaching improves. Effective steps have been taken by school leaders to ensure that there is a more consistent and rigorous approach to managing behaviour. Pupils are now more able to focus on their learning. They are keen to learn and most concentrate well during lessons. However, when the adults intervene too much the pupils lose confidence and are reluctant to persist without constant attention.

Attendance has improved and continues to move towards the national average. Disadvantaged pupils are attending school more regularly. School staff are working closely with pupils, parents and the attendance service. As a result, more pupils come to school every day and are ready to learn. They feel safe and are well cared for in school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last visit, monitoring has not been as regular or as effective as it needs to be to make sure that weaknesses are identified and followed up quickly. Leaders have reduced the amount of time spent keeping a close eye on the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher has focused on ensuring that special needs provision is better organised and targeted more effectively. Previous difficulties in recruiting sufficiently good staff and the need to make sure that Year 3 pupils receive high quality teaching mean that the assistant headteacher is teaching for much of her time. Leaders have, quite rightly, spent a lot of time on the recruitment of new staff for September. External support has also reduced.

The strengths identified in the last visit, such as behaviour management and early years provision, have been maintained. However, some of the same weaknesses commented on in previous reports continue to be evident. These include the teaching of writing, low expectations amongst some teaching and support staff, and too few opportunities for pupils to produce enough work. The impact of these weaknesses is evident in pupils' progress, particularly in writing which remains too slow.

The IEB continues to meet and visit the school regularly. The members ask searching and challenging questions. However, they have not been rigorous enough in interrogating the evidence of improvement which is being presented to them. For example, the reduction in monitoring of teaching means that the robustness of the leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is unclear. Some of their judgements appear slightly inflated and are not supported by the evidence.

The school has improved from a very low starting point and leaders rightly recognise and celebrate these improvements. However, there is a need to recognise that there is still some way to go and the pace of improvement needs to speed up rapidly.

External support

The local authority adviser has supported school leaders in pinpointing where the major weaknesses are in writing and provided some targeted staff training. The local authority, diocese, IEB and school leaders meet every six weeks to review the progress the school is making in bringing about the improvements needed. These meetings involve detailed discussions and cover appropriate ground. However, the evidence of improvement is not checked sufficiently well. The school works closely with other local schools and this has been helpful in implementing the new assessment system. The local authority has reduced the amount of advisory time allocated to the school; but, given the current circumstances, it is important that the school receives additional external support over the next few months.

Priorities for further improvement:

- rapidly improve the quality of the teaching of writing
- ensure that all pupils benefit from frequent opportunities to write at length.