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25 June 2015

Kerrie Lewis
Acting Executive 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 23–24 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 third 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

No more than one newly qualified teacher may be appointed 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 Cathedral Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of appropriate authority for Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School

cc. Karen Bradshaw Director of Children's Services for Shropshire

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 third monitoring inspection on 23–24 June 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and visited parts of lessons, some of which were seen jointly with the acting executive headteacher or deputy headteacher. The inspector held meetings with the acting executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair of Interim Executive Board (IEB) and one of the local authority's school improvement advisers. The inspector spoke to pupils during lessons and break times, and met with a group of pupils to discuss their work, their views about the school and the behaviour and safety of pupils. The inspector spoke to some parents at the start of the second day of inspection. The school's current action plan was checked to gauge how much progress the school has made since the last monitoring inspection in March 2015. Assessment data and information about pupils' attainment and progress were scrutinised. The single central record was checked to ensure that new staff have been added and that the school complies with statutory requirements in relation to vetting and disclosure.

Context

Two permanent class teachers and a teaching assistant have been appointed since the last monitoring inspection in March 2015. These teachers replace two temporary teachers. The IEB met for the first time at the end of March 2015 and appointed a Chair. As reported at the time of the last monitoring inspection, the IEB took over from the governing body at the end of March. At the time of this monitoring inspection, the IEB was in the process of inviting applications and short-listing candidates for the permanent executive headship position.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' work, teachers' marking and assessments, together with more consistent and ambitious teaching, show that teachers and leaders are accelerating the progress of pupils who were previously underachieving. Increasingly accurate assessment data show that standards continue to rise, as reported during the last monitoring inspection. Standards are likely to be above last year's national average, as more pupils than previously are reaching or exceeded age-related levels in English and mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 6.

Leaders and teachers have closed the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others across the school (disadvantaged pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals). Gaps are also closing rapidly between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally. Significant improvements to the teaching have also led to more ambitious learning targets for pupils of all abilities to aim for. An increasing proportion of the most-able pupils are reaching higher levels

than previously, and the proportion that have made more than the expected rates of progress in writing and mathematics compares favourably with last year's national average. In reading, teachers' own assessments show for current Year 6 pupils, however, that too few pupils have made more than expected progress and this was a similar outcome to last year's national test results.

Improvements have come about because teachers' expectations are higher than previously. Pupils' writing shows marked improvement in its accuracy, form and structure. Achievement in reading is improving, although standards could still be higher. The school has begun to address the slower improvement to achievement in reading, particularly in Key Stage 2, by providing pupils with more opportunities to read a wider and more challenging range of books and texts. For example, Year 6 pupils are currently reading extracts from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in preparation for an end-of-year performance.

Teachers use consistent methods in the early years and Key Stage 1 to help pupils read by using phonics (letters and sounds). Younger pupils are improving their reading and writing skills; they can spell more accurately when writing and they break down unfamiliar words into composite sounds when reading. In mathematics, pupils are now provided with more challenging problem-solving tasks and core number skills are usually being taught effectively across the school.

The quality of teaching

There continue to be marked and sustained improvements to the quality of teaching. The recent appointment of two permanent teachers has further strengthened the teaching and provides greater consistency that builds on the good start being made in the early years and Key Stage 1. In a short time, the acting executive headteacher has monitored, supported and challenged teachers and support staff, and this has eliminated all inadequate teaching. Workbooks and assessments show that an increasing amount of teaching is now good or better. This is a significant improvement since the school was placed in special measures.

Teachers' marking has improved and pupils' books show that teachers are intervening more during lessons to support and correct pupils' work. This increased intervention is helping most pupils to improve their writing and mathematics work, although some pupils still make avoidable spelling errors when writing independently. Although teachers are improving the way they mark pupils' work, some comments in workbooks are not precise enough. For example, the comment, 'This is nice work', does not point to reasons why the writing is of good quality or to what can still be improved. In mathematics, pupils' work shows that they are not always being challenged enough to extend their knowledge and understanding, and they tend to repeat too many exercises. Although repeated number exercises aim to consolidate pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, there is too much repetition

of work that is set at the same level and which does not improve pupils' competence or mastery of number skills.

Teachers are now using more accurate assessments than previously to group pupils by ability. In addition, leaders are already considering further refinements to assessment in preparation for the new National Curriculum in September 2015. Information and data about pupils' progress and performance are accessible to both teachers and members of the IEB. Staff and leaders are now in a stronger position to extract information about the progress of particular groups of pupils and individuals. This is helping teachers to adapt their lessons to meet the particular learning needs of those who may be falling behind. This was evident in Year 2 when the teacher marked pupils' first drafts of extended writing and identified gaps in some pupils' sentence structure. The teacher used this information to plan alternative work for one group of pupils to help them catch up.

The most effective teachers provide clear learning objectives for pupils to aim for and they check the accuracy of pupils' work during the lesson. In Year 2, for example, this helped pupils to redraft their writing to learn how best to construct paragraphs accurately. Most lessons, like the example cited above, make it clear to pupils what they are expected to learn, but workbooks and observations of some lessons show that this is not always the case. The tasks that pupils undertake do not always reflect what was planned for them to learn. For example, when stating that pupils are going to learn about the value of digits in large numbers, the tasks set do not test their understanding when pupils are only expected to add two large numbers together.

Where learning is most effective, teachers make best use of time and resources. They encourage more productive and purposeful learning that is responsive to pupils' different learning needs and abilities. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 6 received clear step-by-step instructions that helped them apply their knowledge of multiplication to calculate the relative volumes of different containers. In Years 4 and 5, pupils were thoroughly engaged and enlivened by the challenge of extending and improving sentences using similes and metaphors, such as, 'The seagull squawked like an injured bear.'

In the early years, Reception children are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The children are expected to work without direct adult support and to use this time productively to work with others to solve problems. For example, the children were observed making rapid progress building towers with coloured cubes to form patterns and then describing or matching their towers with other children, using the correct positional language.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The most noticeable and significant improvement evident during this monitoring inspection was how engaged and attentive pupils were in all the lessons observed. Learning behaviour is much better than previously in all classes. Very little inappropriate behaviour occurs because teachers apply the school's behaviour code in classrooms consistently well. Parents confirm this, and pupils told the inspector that they are expected to learn more now and work harder.

Teachers consistently make sure that pupils understand what is expected, how they should behave and respond to questions, and how best to work productively. Pupils learn about fairness and moral values through assemblies and religious education, although those pupils spoken to had very little understanding of other non-Christian faith systems or religious beliefs. This makes it difficult for some pupils to be prepared for life beyond school in modern multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain.

The school makes good use of the primary schools sports fund through the use of specialist sports coaches that lead and support physical education lessons. Physical activity, sport and healthy living are promoted well. Many pupils play ball games and take part in a range of other sports and activities, such as residential visits, to improve their outdoor skills. Outdoor areas are used well, such as the 'forest school' programme to improve pupils' understanding and appreciation of the natural world and different habitats.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in attendance rates that are in line with the national average. Persistent absence rates are low, and pupils are punctual and ready for school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The acting executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and the IEB, together with the support and challenge offered by the local authority's improvement adviser, undertake regular pupil progress reviews and scrutinise teachers' performance. This is building further capacity for sustained improvement and is improving the quality of teaching across the school. Staff morale is high and the parents spoken to reported that they are happy with the school and what it is offering their children.

There is now a skilled and well-qualified group of people that make up the IEB, which has already met several times to review the school's progress. The IEB is now well placed to provide clear and systematic oversight of the school's progress towards its removal from special measures. The highly skilled acting executive headteacher is working with staff and focusing her attention on sustaining improvements to the achievement of pupils across the ability range in all classes. These positive developments are providing a secure platform for sustained improvement. The core task now for the Shrewsbury Diocese and IEB is to secure

permanent leadership for the school that can build on the successes reported so far. In addition, the school now has the potential to develop middle leadership, as there is a stronger group of teachers who are capable of taking on more leadership and management responsibilities. In all classes, teachers and support staff are increasingly influencing the quality of each other's work, so the school is well placed to self-sustain school improvement.

The acting executive headteacher and deputy headteacher undertake accurate assessments of the quality of teaching and provide helpful feedback to staff after monitoring lessons. Assessment data and reviews of pupils' progress and performance are presented to the IEB, although the data does not set out an analysis of the distinctive features of the performance of different groups of pupils, such as the most able or those eligible for the pupil premium. Nonetheless, the information about pupils' progress and attainment is now more accurate than previously. Consequently, the IEB and leaders are now better placed to use more precise information about pupils' achievement to judge whether teachers and support staff are effective enough.

The school's current action plan is much sharper than previously and has key milestones with measures of success to evaluate and targets to aim for. The IEB and leaders use the action plan to gauge the impact of actions on raising standards and improving teaching still further. The school's action plan sets out the correct and most urgent priorities for improvement. As the data was only just being collated at the time of this monitoring inspection, the expected achievement targets for pupils eligible for the pupil premium in 2016 were not included in the action plan.

Some assessments of early years' children's past performance were inaccurate. This made it difficult to set the right targets for pupils to aim for by the end of Year 2. Leaders have accommodated this by providing more realistic learning targets for Key Stage 1 pupils. Early assessments of children's development and learning are becoming increasingly accurate.

The school's single central record, staff vetting and safe recruitment policies and practices continue to comply with statutory requirements

External support

The local authority's support has been effective overall. The school improvement adviser has undertaken regular monitoring reviews and is reporting the outcome of these to the IEB and acting executive headteacher. The guidance offered is helpful to the school's leaders and staff. Increasing partnership work with other schools is providing staff with good opportunities to see and share good practice.