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30 June 2015

Miss Laura Willcox
Acting Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Devizes
St Joseph's Place
Devizes
SN10 1DD

Dear Miss Willcox

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Devizes

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you as acting headteacher, the interim executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chair of the Strategy Group, a representative from the local authority and a representative from Clifton Diocese. I also made a short tour of the school with you and met briefly with the staff. I evaluated the governing body's statement of action and the school improvement plan.

Context

The headteacher resigned with immediate effect in June 2015. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher and is presently being supported by the headteacher of at St Edmunds Catholic Primary School, as a consultant headteacher. From September 2015, the headteacher of St Edmund's Catholic Primary will become interim executive headteacher at St Joseph's. The deputy headteacher of St

Edmund's will become interim head of school. Further changes to senior and middle leadership are planned to take effect from September 2015. A number of governors have resigned from post since the inspection in March 2015. The governing body is actively exploring joining a multi-academy trust.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The governing body and leaders are clear about what the school needs to do to improve and how rapidly these improvements need to take place. The improvement plan accurately identifies the actions to be taken. However, leaders and governors have had to focus their energies on stabilising the leadership of the school and this has slowed the pace of improvements in teaching and learning.

Nonetheless, swift action has been taken to establish a Strategic Task Group. These are a group of highly-skilled external governors, two of whom are National Leaders of Governance. The remit of this group is to review the current structure of governance, make recommendations for future organisation of governance and hold the school to account whilst the school is in special measures. As a result of these appointments and the work being completed, there has not been an appropriate opportunity to undertake the required external review of governance. Governors accept that this should now be conducted as a matter of priority when the structure of the governing body is finalised.

You have received good support from the headteacher of St Edmund's Catholic Primary School, Calne. With his help, you have successfully stabilised the school. Regular communication with parents and carers and your visible presence at the start and end of the school day have helped regain the trust of parents and the local community. Leaders and governors have successfully shared their plans for rapidly improving the school at an open meeting for parents. Consequently, parents have a clearer understanding of the actions being taken to improve outcomes for their children.

There are plans in place to focus on the quality of teaching and learning. You and the executive headteacher have reviewed and strengthened policies to support effective teaching and the use of assessment. However, these are in the early stages of implementation and it is not possible at this stage to measure their impact on pupils' achievement. Planned actions are appropriate and well-focused on the right priorities. However, the timeline for improvement is too protracted and it is not clear enough who will monitor the impact of planned actions, or when. This is, to some degree, inevitable, given that leadership arrangements have, until now, been uncertain. You and other leaders accept the urgency to get things moving now.

You are making good use of the external support provided by Wiltshire local authority and Clifton Diocese. They have been active in brokering leadership support and in helping you develop appropriate improvement plans.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The governing body's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

However, the improvement plan requires some amendments prior to my next monitoring visit. Specifically, you should:

- accelerate the implementation of agreed actions for improvement
- specify how, when and by whom these actions will be monitored and evaluated.

The external review of governance should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Wiltshire and the Clifton Diocese. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector