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6 July 2015

Mrs Louise Newport
Consultant Headteacher
Farnley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Farnley
West Yorkshire
LS21 2QJ

Dear Mrs Newport

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Farnley Church of England
Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 July 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 March 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 and the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better so that all pupils make at least good progress throughout the school and develop good or better attitudes to learning by:
 - raising teachers' expectations and those of the pupils, as to what pupils are capable of achieving and ensure that pupils work harder and learn more effectively in lessons
 - making sure that teachers make accurate judgements about each pupil's attainment and progress in order to plan learning that delivers good and consistent progress for all groups of pupils
 - making sure teachers use questioning well to check the progress that pupils are making during lessons and make adjustments to their teaching where necessary
 - giving pupils precise guidance about the progress they are making, how they can improve their work and by making sure that all pupils respond to teachers' marking by correcting errors in their work.
- Ensure that all pupils make good progress in writing and in mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - making sure that the needs of the most able pupils are fully met
 - making sure that pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their writing skills across all subjects and that high standards of presentation are established
 - developing regular opportunities for pupils to write and record work for themselves in subjects other than literacy
 - making sure that teachers plan lessons so that pupils have regular opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Ensure that the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables them to make good or better progress in each area of their development by:
 - carrying out a thorough analysis of the skills of staff working with the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure this is followed through with actions to address any deficiencies
 - making sure that the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance by:
 - implementing procedures for managing the performance of staff so that their targets are directly related to the progress pupils make
 - developing the leadership skills of staff so they can be effective in leading aspects of the school's work

provide high quality training to the school's staff to ensure they have the skills they need to carry out their duties effectively
ensuring the governing body has the skills needed to hold the school to account for its performance and how it compares to other schools.

An external review of governance should be undertaken 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 3 July 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the consultant headteacher, acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative from the local authority. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) visited both classrooms to observe teaching, speak to pupils informally about their learning and scrutinise the current standard of work in pupils' books. HMI also evaluated a wide range of documentation, including the school's analysis of pupils' current attainment and progress and the most recent checks made on the quality of teaching.

Context

The substantive headteacher remains absent from work. Governors have accepted her resignation with effect from 31 August 2015. Interim leadership responsibilities continue to be shared between the consultant headteacher, the acting headteacher and the teacher in charge. One governor has resigned since the last monitoring inspection.

The number of pupils on roll has fallen dramatically since the previous monitoring inspection. School numbers have declined by approximately 75% so that only 10 pupils remain registered at the school; four in the early years and Key Stage 1 class and six in the Key Stage 2 class. The parents of eight further pupils have indicated their children will be moving to another school in September 2015. At the time of the monitoring inspection, there were no children accessing the early years. The Key Stage 2 class was being taught by the acting headteacher as part of his part-time teaching commitment.

The governing body has started the process for consulting on school closure.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress remains too variable. Despite nearly 16 months since the section 5 inspection that placed the school in special measures, significant inconsistencies remain between the achievement of pupils in different key stages, groups and subjects. While some pupils are making better progress, particularly in Key Stage 2, others continue to make inadequate progress from their starting points. In some instances, pupils have regressed in their learning over the course of the academic year; some pupils have finished the year achieving at a lower overall standard of work than they were capable of achieving in September 2014.

Recent improvements to the teaching of mathematics have led to a greater proportion of pupils making better progress this term. Opportunities for all pupils to use their developing knowledge, skills and understanding to solve problems and

think for themselves are increasing, although the most able pupils still do not reach their full potential. Teachers move this group of pupils on to more difficult concepts, above those normally covered by pupils of their age, too quickly. They do not give enough time for the most able to master their newly acquired skills in greater depth and through a range of different contexts before moving them forwards again. As such, some concepts are not fully secure and this superficial understanding risks a faster rate of learning in the future. Few of the most able pupils are making the consistently good or better progress needed to reach the very highest levels of achievement of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching

The difference in the quality of teaching between key stages remains stark. While teaching is improving steadily in Key Stage 2, it remains weak in the early years and Key Stage 1 class. Teaching practices have not moved on quickly enough for the youngest pupils and their learning remains inconsistent. Pupils do not yet receive the high quality of education they deserve.

Staff have struggled to adapt to the reduction in pupil numbers and the added challenges this brings when sustaining interactions with six or fewer pupils. Recent improvements to planning have focused staff on the precise starting points of each pupil so that they can create learning opportunities that better meet pupils' abilities. Some teachers are yet to turn their precise planning into an effective reality within their classroom. Too many instances still remain where pupils' misconceptions are not identified and addressed quickly during the course of a lesson. Teachers do not listen to the responses pupils give to their questions to enable them to reshape a task, provide additional support or challenge pupils further. Leaders acknowledge that greater emphasis needs to be placed on how staff adapt their teaching, in the moment and regardless of what they have planned, to maximise pupils' learning.

Most teaching assistants observed during the inspection contributed well to pupils' learning and progress. They intervened successfully when they identified pupils to be struggling or when specific pupils needed greater reassurance to think through a challenging task for themselves. This adult intervention led to greater confidence and success among supported pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes to learning have moved on quickly. Pupils show themselves to be keen and interested learners who are willing to work hard for their teachers. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 told the inspector that they enjoyed having to think a little harder in mathematics when given problems or challenges to solve. Older pupils also appreciate the feedback they receive in their books about what they have done well and where they need to do better. In nearly all cases observed during inspection, pupils understood what their teacher had written about their work and grasped the

opportunity to correct a calculation or improve upon a bland or clumsily worded sentence. This was leading to better progress, especially in Key Stage 2, and a greater understanding among pupils of the learning process. It is imperative that leaders and staff capitalise fully on this increased engagement from pupils; only consistent, high quality teaching will suffice.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Constant uncertainty about the future of the school has weakened the impact of leaders, governors and staff on school improvement. The ongoing issues around the absence of the headteacher, her subsequent resignation and the impact of significantly fewer pupils on the school's overall budget, has forced governors and the local authority to review the long-term viability of the school. Leaders recognise that this unforeseen set of circumstances has prevented them from moving the school forward as urgently as is needed.

A period of continual change has left staff tired and jaded; morale is low. In part, this has contributed to some teachers being unable to focus relentlessly on improving the quality of their teaching. While interim leaders, supported by senior local authority officers, have provided training and guidance to staff about improving the quality of their practice, the impact of this work has not had the desired effect in both classes. Leaders still pay too little attention to the difference teaching makes to the learning and progress of pupils so that it remains variable between classes. Even when the checking and analysis of pupils' progress data reveal underachievement and, in some instances, regression in pupils' skills and understanding, leaders do not respond rapidly to seek reasons from staff and plan appropriate interventions.

The quality of governance is developing but important decisions about the future of the school have detracted its members from their focus on raising achievement and improving teaching. As such, governors have not scrutinised the most recent achievement data with any great depth to allow them to challenge leaders robustly about those pupils who continue to make inadequate progress. Governors are passionate about the school and want to raise their own game to support leaders and staff better. They rightly recognise they are too reliant on the information provided by the interim headteachers and will need to increase their own visits to school in order to verify, at first hand, the information they are being given by leaders.

The Chair of the Governing Body has acted swiftly and decisively, with the constant support of the local authority, to address the long-term leadership issues of the school. As further concerns have arisen, he has been undeterred in wanting the very best for the pupils and families at Farnley, exhausting all possible alternatives before considering and then consulting on school closure.

External support

The local authority responded quickly to the shortcomings identified at the last monitoring inspection. Increased support from the senior local authority officer has focused on advising leaders and governors about the complex decisions they have faced and pursuing all viable options, such as federation with other schools in the community, to the securing the long-term future of the school. The decision to consult on closure has not been taken lightly.

Local authority officers for mathematics and English have supported teachers to plan to meet the range of pupils' abilities in their class. While successful, this work has only just scratched the surface of what needs to be done to transform the quality of teaching fully. There is much that still needs to be done to ensure consistently good teaching becomes the norm.

Visits to schools with similar, mixed key stage classes have enabled staff to understand, at first hand, what good or better teaching looks like. While leaders have accompanied staff on these visits to enable reflective discussion and ensure observations are focused on what each teacher can adapt for use in their own classroom, few observations of teaching make reference to the impact of this work. Consequently, pupils' progress, especially in the early years and Key Stage 1, remains limited.