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10 July 2015

Ms Laura Sproston
Headteacher
Caston Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
The Street
Caston
Attleborough
NR17 1DD

Dear Mrs Sproston

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

Following my visit to your school on 8–9 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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.

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 Norfolk and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Norwich.

Yours sincerely

Pete Sewell

Associate Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The lead and team inspectors.

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise achievement by:
 - consistently implementing the school's policy for behaviour, and insisting on high standards of conduct at all times from all pupils
 - making sure each new development is fully understood by staff and pupils so that it is implemented effectively
 - teaching challenging lessons that enable pupils to move forward more rapidly in their learning
 - ensuring additional pupil premium funding is used effectively so that these pupils make quicker progress and close the achievement gap between themselves and other pupils
 - adopting methods that ensure pupils concentrate, work hard and learn well
 - closing gaps in pupils' numeracy skills
 - implementing a handwriting policy that is consistently followed to raise standards
 - ensuring teaching assistants have the knowledge and skills to effectively undertake the tasks they are given and so make a stronger contribution to pupils' learning.

- Pupils' need to improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning by showing resilience and perseverance when faced with unfamiliar or difficult work and taking pride in the presentation of their work.

- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - areas for improvement from the previous inspection are quickly and fully implemented, particularly that governors closely monitor and sufficiently challenge the work of the school
 - the recommendations of the review of governance are fully implemented and governors adhere to time frames for actions
 - a leadership and management structure is created, for both school and subject leadership, that is fit for purpose and enables and supports rapid school improvement
 - information about the progress of pupils and work of the school is accurate so that analysis can properly support pupil progress and improvement.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 8 – 9 July 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, parents that attended the numeracy event, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chair of the Improvement Board and a National Leader of Education.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new member of staff to work within Key Stage 1. The school has in place a full complement of permanent staff for September 2015, which it has not had previously. The school is now part of the Dove Federation with Parker's Church of England Primary School. This arrangement started on 3 June 2015. The first meeting of the federation governing body took place on 8 June 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Extensive checking between the teachers from both schools within the federation has meant that all teachers have accurately assessed the current performance of their pupils in mathematics, reading and writing. As a result, teachers have been able to show that all pupils have made good progress over the year and most pupils are rapidly closing the gap in attainment with their peers nationally. Standards at Key Stage 1 have risen and pupils are now two terms behind in reading and one term behind their peers nationally in writing and mathematics. Standards at Key Stage 2 have also improved steadily and pupils are now two terms behind in mathematics and writing, and one term behind in reading. In the recent national tests, all the Key Stage 2 pupils made expected progress from their starting points in Key Stage 1. Standards in writing across the school still remain low as gaps are not closing as fast as they are in mathematics and reading. Disadvantaged pupils have made similar progress as their peers but the school is unable to show if gaps are closing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made progress in line with their peers.

The results from the recent phonics screening test (the sounds that letters make) show that the proportion of pupils in Year 1 achieving an expected standard has risen from 14% in 2014 to 60% in 2015.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has been raised across the school. Teachers have higher expectations of both work and behaviour and the pupils talk about the challenge and excitement they now feel for their learning. There is a driving sense of purpose in the classrooms and pupils work more purposefully at their learning. Evidence from

pupils' books indicates that teaching over time is now more effective, most notably in numeracy, and also in some aspects of writing. Pupils are being given more opportunities to extend their writing skills. Teachers are also marking the pupils' work more effectively to enable them to make even more progress.

The recently introduced phonics strategy has had an impact on the way that phonics is taught. Pupils have more confidence when tackling unfamiliar words and phrases. Phonics is being taught in a well-organised and vibrant manner which is encouraging the pupils to enjoy their learning. This was seen on inspection in Class 1 where the teaching assistant, dressed as a pirate, was challenging the children to either bin the word as it was nonsense, or place it in the treasure chest if it was a real word. The group enjoyed this activity and made good progress.

There is now a whole school writing policy and this has started to impact on pupils' written work in all classrooms. The school has developed a consistent approach to handwriting and this is improving presentation in all classes. Pupils now talk more about enjoying writing and the context in which it is taught. The use of a teaching assistant dressed as a Tour de France cyclist, was a stimulating start to a writing lesson in Class 2, where the pupils were focussing on verbs and adverbial sentences. The impact of this lesson was that all pupils made good progress. However, standards in writing have yet to catch up with mathematics and reading.

In all classes teachers and teaching assistants are applying the school's behaviour policy consistently and appropriately and, as a result, lessons are calm and productive. Teachers are marking regularly and effectively and marking contains helpful comments that enable the pupils to correct and improve their work. On rare occasions teachers do not check the progress of the pupils quickly enough and, as a result, some misconceptions are not being picked up early enough. The most-able pupils are not always being given challenging enough work and they do not make as much progress as they could.

Teaching assistants have a more defined role in class and are having a positive impact on raising standards. The school is ensuring that teaching assistants are developing the skills they need to support and extend pupils' learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils around the school is generally good and the school is now an orderly and safe environment which fosters learning. Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare and a mutual respect has developed between the pupils and the adults that work within the school. In lessons, pupils are more resilient and tackle unfamiliar tasks with more confidence. They rely less on the teacher for help and will ask their friends first. The school has introduced a system of 'buddy groups' that are led by buddy leaders from Years 5 and 6. This has been highly successful and the buddy leaders played an active part in the recent sports day.

Attendance is lower than the national average and is currently lower than in 2014.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders and governors have acted decisively to ensure that the Dove Federation of Caston Primary School and Parker's Church of England Primary School is now an active and effective body. Staff from both schools have taken part in joint training and the checking of standards. This has been highly effective and the drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher have been instrumental in ensuring that all staff feel valued. Effective communication between the leadership and staff of both schools has been an important part of this process. Pupils within Caston Primary School have benefitted from joint visits with Parker's Church of England Primary School, for example to the Royal Norfolk Show, How Hill and Birchham Windmill as well as the BBC Proms Ten Pieces concert in Kings Lynn. This has had a significant impact on all the pupils that took part. There is considerable expertise within the leadership of both schools which is being utilised effectively to raise standards and provide quality training for all staff.

The new governing body has met once, but has yet to clarify how it will hold school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.

An external review of pupil premium spending was completed in October 2014 but the findings of this report have yet to be implemented. An internal review of how this money is spent must be completed before the next inspection.

External support

The Improvement Board has been instrumental in ensuring that standards are rising rapidly within the school. The support of the local authority, through a recent school audit, has been accurate and timely. Regular visits by the National Leader of Education have ensured that the school has an accurate picture of its current performance and knows what it needs to do to improve further. This support has been highly effective.