

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Jane Martin
Interim Headteacher
The CofE Primary School of St Edmund and St John
Beechwood Road
Dudley
DY2 7QA

Dear Mrs Martin

Special measures monitoring inspection of the CofE Primary School of St Edmund and St John

Following my visit to your school on 3–4 November 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action 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 Chief Executive of the drb Group, the Director of Children's Services for Dudley and the Diocese of Worcester.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Bellworthy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by:
 - eradicating all inadequate teaching
 - making sure that teachers in Years 1 to 4 have the knowledge to assess pupils' skills and understanding accurately
 - ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - providing training to improve the quality of the teaching of phonics and mathematics

- Raise achievement and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, by making sure that teachers:
 - have accurate information about what pupils can do and use it to plan effectively the next steps in pupils' learning
 - allow pupils time to extend their learning and deepen their thinking
 - provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematics skills in other subjects.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders check regularly that teaching results in pupils making better progress
 - teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and reflect the work in their books
 - actions and ways of measuring success in the school's improvement plans are focused on improving pupils' achievement
 - leaders who have a subject or key stage responsibility contribute to improvements in teaching and learning.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3–4 November 2015

Evidence

During the inspection, the work of the school was seen in action, documents were scrutinised and teaching was observed in all classes. The majority of teaching was jointly observed with you or the interim deputy headteacher. I met with you, the interim deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Chief Executive of the drb Group and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

There have been a number of significant staffing and leadership changes since the last monitoring inspection in February 2015. At the end of the summer term, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and several teachers left the school. You and the interim deputy headteacher joined the school in September. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator is currently absent from the school and this role is being covered by the interim deputy headteacher. Apart from early years and phonics (the sounds letters make), all other leadership roles are being covered by you and the interim deputy headteacher. Two classes are currently being taught by temporary teachers. The governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board. The school is currently going through the process of becoming an academy. The drb Group are supporting the school through this process and have put you, the interim deputy headteacher and the interim executive board in place.

Outcomes for pupils

The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception has continued to improve. Although it is still below the national average, this achievement represents effective progress, as a significant number of children start Reception with skills that are well below those typical for their age. The majority of children start Reception with little or no knowledge of letter sounds. One third of the children entering Reception have not had any preschool or nursery experience. Pupils' phonics outcomes in Year 1 have continued to improve rapidly and are now just below the national average. Girls' phonics outcomes are above the national average, but boys' are below, despite continuing to improve.

Pupils' outcomes in mathematics have improved slightly in Year 2, but are still below the national average. Other year groups and other subjects show a very mixed picture of pupil outcomes in 2015, with some standards maintained from 2014, but others declining. The new senior leaders ensured that assessments of pupils' work were completed accurately in September. This, along with the recently introduced assessment system, should enable more accurate checking of pupils' progress.

Teachers can then use this information to effectively plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

You and the interim deputy headteacher regularly monitor the quality of teaching and your assessments are accurate. Leaders consider that most weak teaching has been eradicated and that the quality of teaching will improve further when temporary posts are filled. All teachers have received training on how to use the new whole-school assessment system and further training is planned for the near future. This has helped to improve teachers' knowledge of pupils' skills and plan the next steps needed in pupils' learning. High expectations of learning were seen in Reception and the teaching of phonics in Year 1. Where expectations are higher, pupils' outcomes have rapidly improved in Reception and phonics. Expectations in other classes are not yet high enough, especially considering the low starting point of nearly all of the pupils. In addition, nearly all pupils still have a great deal of catching up to do, to reach age-related expectations and be adequately prepared for the next stage of their education. Teachers and teaching assistants now need to increase their expectations of all pupils and to fully appreciate the urgency required to help pupils to catch up. Senior leaders understand the urgency required and are aware that they need to support other staff to appreciate this too.

Teaching observations during the inspection showed that the vast majority of pupils are engaged in their learning and making progress. However, the rate of this progress varies across the school. Pupils' books are regularly marked, but these also demonstrate varied progress and some marking has little impact. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. As a new system has recently been introduced, it is too early to judge how effectively assessment information is being used. Teachers mostly use adults effectively by ensuring pupils of all abilities benefit from group work with teachers and teaching assistants. Staff have received effective training in phonics, leading to better teaching and pupils' outcomes. Teachers received some training in literacy and numeracy in the summer term, but several teachers have left the school since then and the impact of this training is not clear.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils behave well overall and have positive attitudes towards their work. Their conduct in lessons is also positive, as pupils are keen to learn and improve their skills. They know the school's values, which are reinforced in worship and around the school. A few older pupils reported some name-calling issues among pupils, although no difficulties of this nature were evident during the inspection. Leaders' behaviour records are complete and do not identify any particular patterns or concerns. Playtimes are lively and well managed. Leaders have plans to introduce more equipment at playtimes and the pupils are looking forward to this. Some of the

pupils that I spoke to said that pupils were well behaved, but different teachers have different behaviour expectations which affects learning. Pupils treat all adults with respect, including parent volunteers and student teachers for example. In corridors, most pupils walk sensibly and quietly, although some pupils find it harder to always show self-control when not in lessons.

You and the interim deputy headteacher have reintroduced pastoral support for pupils and families this term. While this support is at an early stage, the pastoral support team are able to give examples of the support they are providing. This has been well received by parents, who recognise that their children are happier at school this term. The parents I spoke to also said that more support is now in place for pupils and that senior leaders have more time for parents and pupils.

Pupils arrive at school on time and whole-school attendance has improved this term, although it remains below the national average. Senior leaders are aware of this and of the need to work with pupils and parents to improve overall attendance.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You and the interim deputy headteacher have worked effectively to stabilise the school in a short space of time. You have quickly put systems in place to improve teaching, learning and assessment and to check the curriculum is up to date. Senior leaders have been well supported by the interim executive board, to make decisions regarding staffing and the school's progress towards becoming an academy. Improvement plans are well focused on the areas which need to be developed first, although leaders should ensure these plans clearly state who will be leading, monitoring and evaluating each action. The leadership of phonics and the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective, as a result of high expectations, training and precise teaching. At the time of this monitoring visit, you and the interim deputy headteacher were leading all other areas of the school. This includes regularly checking the quality of teaching, measuring the amount of progress shown in pupils' books and supporting teachers to further improve.

Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the improvements needed to rapidly close attainment gaps. Leaders are aware that they now need to raise all teachers' expectations of pupils, to drive improvement and raise pupils' outcomes across the school. Leaders have plans to develop the school's engagement with parents and agree that the school website requires further work in order to meet the current requirements of the Department of Education.

External support

The drb Group, who were asked by the local authority to support the school, acted swiftly to put you, the interim deputy headteacher and the interim executive board

in place, following the departure of the previous headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body. The interim executive board meets every month and has provided effective leadership, guidance and practical support to the senior leaders. One of the members of the interim executive board represents the Diocese of Worcester. The local authority agree that the impact of their own support has not been effective enough to rapidly improve the school. The local authority now have appropriate plans to have regular meetings with the interim executive board and the Diocese of Worcester, to ensure that effective support is provided to help rapidly improve pupil outcomes.

The school should take further action to:

- rapidly increase teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of pupils and the work challenges presented to them
- check that teachers are following the school's marking policy and that this helps to support pupils' progress
- ensure that all staff fully understand the urgency required to help pupils rapidly close gaps in their learning and improve outcomes.