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Mrs S Sayers
Executive Headteacher
Send CofE First School
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Woking
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Dear Mrs Sayers

Special measures monitoring inspection of Send CofE First School

Following my visit with Penny Orme, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2015. 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 appoint one newly qualified teacher to teach in the Reception Year 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 Federation Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Surrey and the Director of Education for the diocese of Guildford.

Yours sincerely

Clive Close
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - work in lessons is set at the right level so that all pupils are fully challenged
 - teachers plan effectively for reading, writing and mathematics
 - teachers' questioning extends pupils' knowledge and understanding and involves them in responding in a way that takes their learning forward
 - teachers' feedback to pupils is clear and specific and that pupils respond fully so that they are more involved in improving their own work
 - teaching assistants provide effective support and engage more positively with pupils
 - systems to check on pupils' progress are sufficiently thorough and are used by teachers to identify clear next steps for pupils' learning.
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - there is regular, well-planned teaching of reading, and this is focused on the development of key skills that pupils can use when reading independently
 - in writing, there are clear expectations for each year group for punctuation, spelling and grammar that are thoroughly reinforced
 - phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught systematically, especially in the early years
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills through problem-solving and investigation.
- Improve the quality of the provision in the early years so that children's needs are better met, by ensuring that:
 - planning for activities is thorough, tailored to children's needs and challenging for all
 - staff have a secure understanding of children's development and learning
 - the classrooms and outdoor areas are exciting and stimulating so that children do not wander around aimlessly but are interested and learning
 - adults' questioning and discussions with children develop their knowledge and understanding
 - staff promote children's social skills much more extensively.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - training for senior and middle leaders enables them to carry out their roles more effectively so that they bring about rapid improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement
 - senior and middle leaders develop a clear understanding of how to interpret and use information for tracking pupils' progress in order to raise pupils' achievement
 - all governors receive the necessary training to enable them to support the school fully in making rapid improvement
 - there is effective support for pupils who receive additional funding and for those who are disabled or who have special educational needs within the classroom in order to cater for their needs more fully and ensure they make rapid progress
 - there is strong, effective leadership of the early years.
- Improve behaviour by developing pupils' understanding of the importance of good behaviour wherever they are.
- Improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to show how this aspect of leadership and management 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 management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 November 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and met with the executive headteacher, the executive deputy headteacher and other school leaders. They also met with parents, members of the federation governing body and a representative of the diocese. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector conducted a learning walk with the executive headteacher, visiting every classroom. Inspectors observed eight lessons, seven of them jointly with school leaders. They spoke to pupils in class, looked at their work and observed how they conduct themselves around the school. Inspectors took note of parents' opinions from Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and from the school's own parent questionnaire.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, the school has recruited four new teachers, including one who is leader of the early years. The school has also appointed a new home-school link worker.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes for pupils are now improving. Evidence gathered by inspectors from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, the school's own progress information and the results of national tests are all testament to the real sense of urgency to improve all aspects of the school seen during the inspection.

Disappointing end-of-year results for the early years provision, due mainly to the legacy of poor provision, mask recent rapid improvements. Children are now making much better progress from their different starting points due to improved procedures and learning opportunities. A new focus on reading and phonics is also having impact and the school's own predictions for the number of children achieving a good level of development this year should bring outcomes back in line with those seen nationally.

Improvements in the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check, which saw the school move from well below to just above the national average, are due to much-improved provision, including that for disadvantaged pupils who did particularly well, matching the outcomes of other pupils in the school and nationally.

Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have also improved. In national tests, the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels has increased, although because of the legacy of poor provision, pupils are still not achieving as well as they might.

This is particularly apparent for the most-able pupils, and the school is working hard to address this.

The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is still inconsistent and continues to be well below that of others in national tests at the end of Year 2. This is also the case for pupils with additional needs. Leaders and teachers are acutely aware of this and know which pupils need to make accelerated progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is improving, although it remains inconsistent across the school. It is clear that teachers are keen to improve and a lot of work has taken place to ensure that teaching meets the needs of all pupils.

Teachers now have a much better understanding of assessment and are beginning to be more effective at planning lessons that better engage pupils in their learning. However, in too many lessons observed, pupils were not making as much progress as they might and opportunities were missed to deepen understanding or challenge the most-able. School leaders are aware of this and have arranged visits to other good or better schools to ensure that the expectation of staff is appropriate in order for all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

The teaching of phonics is also improving and has been strengthened by timely training for teaching and support staff. Because of this, more pupils have started Year 2 with phonics skills that will better support their progress in other subjects, especially in reading and writing.

The role of support staff has been reviewed and an audit of skills completed. This has led to a restructuring of the way learning support assistants are deployed, although the results of these changes are yet to be fully embedded. Where support staff are used effectively, they have good impact on the progress pupils make, particularly those pupils who need extra reassurance or who lack confidence. However, in some lessons, learning support assistants are passive and more work is required to ensure this valuable resource is used to maximum effect.

A lot of work has been undertaken to improve the quality of feedback to pupils in order for them to better understand how to improve their work. Again, whilst there are very obvious improvements to be seen, the quality of this aspect of teaching is variable across year groups and within different subjects. Leaders are aware of this and confident that this will improve as new policies and routines become further embedded.

Teaching in the early years is improving. This has been a priority for school leaders and children's needs are now much better met because of this. The learning environment is improving, particularly in the outdoor area. However, financial implications have restricted how much school leaders can develop this aspect of the provision and this remains a priority for the future.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

During this monitoring inspection, inspectors saw no evidence of poor behaviour or behaviour that would disrupt or hinder the learning of others within classrooms. Pupils were confident and polite. They were curious about why inspectors were visiting the school and many of them were keen to show inspectors their work, even before they had been asked.

Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved, although inspectors did observe some low-level off-task behaviour when pupils weren't challenged enough or the work they had been set didn't engage them fully. However, it is clear that relationships are positive between staff and the pupils, who are keen to do their best.

Pupils were observed to be respectful to staff and to one another both inside and outside the classrooms. Breaktimes were lively, but pupils played well together and were clear that they enjoyed the company of friends and were very keen to share their enjoyment of school with inspectors.

The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved over time and continues to do so. The school has worked hard to ensure that this group attends school every day and school leaders are very aware of individual pupils and the reasons they sometimes don't come to school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

School leaders at all levels are working with energy and commitment in order to improve all aspects of the school rapidly. The executive headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school which is shared by all staff. Governors also share the vision and a lot has been achieved in a relatively short period of time.

At the time of the first monitoring inspection, the school's improvement planning was judged to be not fit for purpose. Since this time there has been a clear focus on self-evaluation and improvement planning and the resulting school development plan is now a very useful tool for school improvement.

Middle leaders are becoming more effective, although the nature of the split site between the two federated schools creates obvious logistical problems that senior leaders are keen to resolve. The leadership of the early years has been transformed in a short period of time and this is having a positive impact on provision in the Nursery and Reception classes.

The school has introduced a new system to monitor and track the progress of pupils. This is now well established and proving a useful tool to identify those pupils who are doing well and those who need extra support. The system of formal meetings to monitor pupil progress is becoming more established and is beginning to allow school leaders to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make.

Performance management of teaching staff is now fully embedded, with targets linked to school priorities, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. This system not only supports the progress of pupils, but ensures that the professional development of staff, including middle leaders, remains a priority.

The governing body has developed further since the first monitoring inspection and is now better equipped to hold school leaders to account, ensuring the drive for rapid improvement is maintained. It works well in partnership with the local authority and diocese and has been instrumental in moving forward plans to join the school with its federation partner junior school to form one primary school on the existing school site.

External support

The local authority has supported the school in a number of ways, including providing extra finance and brokering intermediate review and challenge meetings to support strategic and practical aspects of leadership. The executive headteacher has also benefited from high-quality support from a dedicated leadership partner and a leadership reviewer in order to drive improvement. More hands-on support in the form of literacy and mathematics consultants has not been as successful as that received for the early years phase due to the inconsistency created by changes in personnel providing this crucial service. Despite this, external support, including that of the diocese, is having a positive effect on the rapid improvements required in this school.