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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 with Jane Edgerton, Ofsted Inspector, on 19–20 January 2016, 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 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. This is subject to prior consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 19–20 January 2016

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 the interim senior leaders. Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, groups of pupils and parents. Meetings were also held with a representative from the local authority and the interim executive board, which includes a representative from the Diocese of Worcester.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in November 2015, a new temporary teacher has been appointed in Year 5. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator remains absent from the school and this role is being led by the interim deputy headteacher and another teacher.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's assessment information shows that pupils' skills have improved in this academic year, although progress is not consistent across year groups. Pupils in Year 6 and the early years have made the most progress, as a result of stronger teaching and higher expectations. The new assessment system has enabled teachers and interim senior leaders to have a better knowledge of individual pupil progress and analyse trends across subjects and pupil groups. Pupil progress meetings are now better informed and have led to improvements in the provision for individual pupils and groups. Parents are kept informed about their child's progress through termly meetings. Leaders and teachers know that pupils' progress is not rapid and most pupils are unlikely to achieve age-related expectations by the end of this academic year. However, strong leadership and typically better teaching are leading to improved pupil outcomes, as demonstrated by the current assessment information and supported by inspection evidence.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The provision in early years continues to be strong and teaching has improved in most year groups, especially in Year 6. The provision in Year 5 has improved as a result of a new appointment and staffing changes, although it is too early to measure the full impact of this development. Most teachers now have higher expectations of pupils and deliver more effective lessons. Pupils' workbooks demonstrate progress, although this is stronger where the teaching is better. Teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work, seen in some workbooks,

are not high enough. Leaders plan to work on pupils' handwriting and improve pupils' presentation of their work in the near future.

Observations of teaching during the inspection showed that there was greater challenge in some lessons and, as a result, pupils in these classes are more engaged. The rate of pupil progress varies across the school, which matches the patterns shown in the pupil progress information. The interim senior leaders have built an effective relationship with the staff and have an accurate assessment of the strengths and development areas of teaching. Leaders are planning to introduce a new marking and feedback policy soon and agree that high expectations of pupils are not yet consistent across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils enjoy coming to school and many talk excitedly about the new curriculum approach started this term, with topics such as 'Mission to Mars'. They consider that teaching is getting better as the staff help them to address misconceptions and make progress. The pupils who spoke to inspectors have a good awareness of e-safety and the potential risks associated with social media, but a less developed understanding of radicalisation. Pupils say they feel safe at school and any problems with other pupils are dealt with quickly. Pupils behave well in lessons and are more engaged in learning, as staff expectations are generally higher. Pupils treat all adults with respect and feel the interim senior leaders have helped their school to improve.

Several new pupils who joined the school recently have settled quickly and feel well supported. The pastoral support team works hard to make sure vulnerable pupils are supported, kept safe and their families are kept fully informed. The interim leaders of special educational needs and disabilities have worked hard to provide the support which these pupils need and deserve. As a result, the provision for these pupils has improved and they are typically making better progress.

Whole-school attendance has stayed below the national average at the same level as last term, although attendance in some year groups, such as Year 5, has fallen. Interim senior leaders are aware that the monitoring of attendance needs to be tighter and further work is needed with parents to reduce absence.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim senior leaders have continued to stabilise the school and increase both parents' and pupils' confidence in the education the pupils are receiving. The atmosphere in the school is increasingly positive and there is now a greater focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The parents who spoke to inspectors are very positive about the ongoing improvements made to the school and appreciative of the way their children are supported. The interim headteacher has provided strong, consistent leadership and is supported effectively by the interim

deputy headteacher. Training and changes made to the deployment of teachers and teaching assistants have led to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. For example, where teachers' expectations are higher, pupils are typically responding well which is leading to better pupil progress. Training time and resources have been well spent on a new assessment system, which has improved both leaders' and teachers' knowledge of the progress and gaps in attainment between groups of pupils.

Improvement plans have been updated and are focused on the key development areas for the school. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and keep the interim executive board closely informed of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The interim executive board regularly checks school developments for themselves by visiting lessons before their meetings which are held during the school day. The board provides strong support and challenge to the interim headteacher. For example, the board is carefully managing the details of the academy conversion process, allowing the interim headteacher to focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. Although the interim executive board was recently not successful in appointing a new permanent headteacher for the school, it is planning an appropriate model of leadership in conjunction with the drb Group.

Safeguarding is effective and staff are kept up to date with the latest training and guidance. Leaders agree there are some aspects of safeguarding which can be further developed to tighten the systems within the school. Leaders are aware that the school website still does not meet the current requirements of the Department for Education. The launch of the new school website is planned to coincide with conversion to an academy.

External support

The drb Group (academy sponsor) has continued to provide good support to the school, in the form of training, and to the interim executive board. One of the members of the interim executive board represents the Diocese of Worcester. Since the last monitoring inspection, Dudley local authority has worked more effectively with the school, drb Group and Diocese. For example, further improvements have been made to early years and assessing pupils with English as an additional language as a result of support from the local authority. Partnership working has helped to provide further improvements in the provision for the current pupils and to secure progress towards becoming an academy in the near future.