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Mr Mark Carter-Tufnell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carter-Tufnell

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Osyth Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23–24 February 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 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 Director of Children's Services for Essex and the Diocese of Chelmsford.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, in writing and mathematics, and raise pupils' attainment and rates of progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers use accurate assessment information to set work at the right level for pupils in class and for homework
 - teaching assistants consistently check on pupils' learning in lessons to make sure that they understand what they are being taught
 - consistently, across the school, comments provided in pupils' marked work help them to move on in their learning and identify key errors in their spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - teachers check that pupils routinely act on the advice they are given through marking
 - teachers demand the best presentation from pupils in their work
 - teaching assistants understand the purpose of activities in reception classes.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - the targets set for pupils' attainment and progress are suitably ambitious
 - leaders' use attainment and progress information to identify and address gaps in learning between different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and the most able
 - leaders focus more on improving the achievement of pupils in spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - leaders regularly check the impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils
 - a broad and balanced range of subjects is taught, sufficient time is given to the teaching of mathematics and that the organisation of classes does not disadvantage any pupils, including the least able
 - British values are actively promoted so that pupils have a better understanding of different faiths found in modern Britain
 - teachers' salary progression is made dependent on their pupils making good progress
 - leaders in the early years check more closely how well children are doing so that they can plan their learning better
 - governors ask more searching questions of school leaders to ensure that pupils make better progress.

- Improve behaviour and safety by ensuring that:
 - records of behaviour and other incidents are recorded in sufficient detail

- leaders analyse logs of behavioural incidents for trends and patterns in order to identify where improvements can be made.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23–24 February 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the subject leader for mathematics, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). The inspector also met with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6, the Vice-Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. He also scrutinised the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. The inspector spoke to a number of parents at the end of the school day.

Context

An acting deputy headteacher took up his post in November 2015. Two new teachers have been appointed to replace teachers of classes in Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4. The school plans to become an academy on 1 April 2016.

Outcomes for pupils

Attainment at the end of Year 6 continues to rise. Achievement information provided by the school as well as the inspector's scrutiny of pupils' books indicate that pupils in Year 6 are making expected progress in reading and mathematics, but not yet in writing. The greatest gains across the school have been made in mathematics where teachers and learning support assistants have received a greater amount of training in order to better plan for the needs of pupils and so ensure that their rates of progress increase.

Pupils in Year 2 are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and in mathematics. Information provided by the school indicates that disadvantaged pupils in Years 2, 3, 4 and 6 are making better progress than previously. Work in pupils' books and in lessons demonstrates that progress remains inconsistent across year groups because the pupils experience teaching of variable quality. The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally continue to close but still remain too wide. The school's policy of routinely recording support provided for these pupils and its impact is not being implemented consistently. Senior leaders have set ambitious but realistic targets for 2016, and forecast improved outcomes linked to further improvements in teaching.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching in the school has continued to improve as systems for assessing pupils' starting points and measuring their progress become more established. This information has assisted teachers in planning for learning which meets the needs of different groups of pupils better than at the time of the last

inspection. Systems for assessing pupils' progress continue to develop, but some teachers are more adept and confident in making effective use of them than others at this stage. The school continues to pilot different approaches to assessment, including one in a combined Year 5 and 6 class which makes use of stickers to record when verbal feedback has been given and to suggest how pupils might improve their work. These stickers also set additional tasks for pupils to complete. Pupils in this class are given the responsibility of maintaining their own record of the progress they are making by identifying when they have successfully accomplished a task against a list of 'I can do' statements. Many pupils across a range of year groups spoken to told the inspector they believed they were doing well because their teacher wrote positive comments or they did well in their tests, but few could actually explain whether they were achieving as well as they were expected to based on their age.

Books are marked more regularly and more teachers are providing helpful comments to support pupils in improving their work. This is an enhancement compared to the previous inspection. As the school can now identify some existing good practice across the school, it is crucial that this good practice be shared so that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching that exist within the same year groups can be tackled. Some pupils continue to make the same mistakes following their teacher's marking. The inspector saw some work from pupils that was presented very neatly, but in some books presentation remains poor which is likely to impact on pupils' achievement. School leaders have rightly identified the need to improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling as a key priority. Teachers were observed making effective use of subject-specific terminology which they expected pupils to make use of in their work.

Teaching assistants have received appropriate training to make them more effective in their role. The inspector observed them actively working with a large number of pupils in each class, beyond those who have special educational needs or disability.

Typically, pupils listen to teachers well at the start of lessons and understand what they are expected to learn. Pupils respond positively to good-quality teaching and when they are suitably challenged. More teachers are planning lessons to meet the needs of more-able pupils by providing additional and, more importantly, more difficult work, when these pupils have completed the task set. Occasionally, when pupils are allowed to select their own tasks based on levels of difficulty, a few pupils select a task which is too easy, rather than start with one which is suitably challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are typically positive when the teaching engages their interest. The vast majority of pupils work well with each other and follow their teachers' instructions. Some low-level disruptive behaviour persists which

includes talking when the teacher is talking or when a fellow pupil is responding to a teacher's question. Pupils behave well when moving around the school and socialise well with one another. The inspector observed pupils socialising with each other well when at play outside and noted an improvement in their supervision by the midday supervisory staff. This is a direct result of well-targeted training which ensures that these members of staff play a greater role in keeping children safe and ensuring that pupils maximise their time outside of lessons.

School leaders have reviewed and revised the school's behaviour policy and all stakeholders were given the opportunity to contribute towards this. Consequently, all stakeholders have ownership of the policy and are keen to see that it is being implemented effectively. The policy does not state how the effectiveness of its implementation will be monitored or measured. Boundaries are clearer, and pupils are more aware of the consequences of their actions. They are also more aware of the rewards associated with behaving well. School leaders now log incidents of poor behaviour more systematically as well as actions they have taken. The logs have started to identify incidents by pupil group, for example disadvantaged pupils, but would be more effective if they identified other groups including pupils who have special educational needs or disability.

Pupils have been provided with more opportunities to develop their own leadership skills and to take on greater responsibility. They spoke positively to the inspector about the range of opportunities available to them, including the new roles of prefect, play leaders and sports leaders. They have a very good understanding of the different forms bullying can take and are confident that any incidents of bullying that are reported will be dealt with quickly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has continued to ensure that the school's weaker aspects are being systematically tackled. Weaker teaching is being addressed, and targets for managing teachers' performance are now more rigorous, focusing specifically on targets relating to pupils' progress. Capacity to secure improvement has been added to by the appointment of an acting deputy headteacher who teaches English and mathematics as well as being responsible for improving standards of behaviour in the school. The headteacher continues to teach on a daily basis, but the appointment of the acting deputy headteacher and extra administrative support in the office has ensured that the school continues to make progress.

Senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to develop the middle leaders. These colleagues are taking on greater responsibility for their own areas and appropriate support is being provided to ensure they fulfil their roles more effectively and are able to play a greater part in the strategic direction of the school. Clearly, the teaching of mathematics has improved and is impacting on pupils' outcomes. Information of pupils' achievement is being used more effectively by these

colleagues in their own improvement planning. The early years leader checks on children's progress more regularly than previously. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is not fully effective because the leadership of this area is not yet strategic enough to ensure a comprehensive overview of the special educational needs provision.

The school continues to improve, but it faces some key challenges. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching has yet to be eradicated and has been challenging due to the large proportion of temporary staff appointed to cover teacher vacancies. Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is not yet secure enough to ensure that every pupil makes the progress they should.

The ambitious school improvement plan is helping to drive improvement and leaders' regular evaluation of the impact of actions taken shows that progress is being made. The headteacher adopts an honest and transparent approach when evaluating the school's performance.

Pupils with whom the inspector met demonstrated a good understanding of the school's values. These Christian values tie in well with fundamental British values, and discussions with pupils show that they put into practice what they are being taught.

The IEB provides a high degree of challenge and support to the headteacher. Members demonstrate a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it still faces. Minutes of the monthly meetings reflect a good perception of school improvement strategies, and members ask pertinent questions of the headteacher which are linked to the school's improvement plan.

The school's plans to become an academy are progressing well and links have already been formed with existing schools in the multi-academy trust in order to share good practice.

External support

School leaders and members of the IEB are rightly positive about the impact the local authority has had on securing school improvement. The local authority continues to monitor the work of the school closely and rigorously through its fortnightly meetings with school leaders and its programme of reviews. A recent two-day review of the school's progress is accurate and evaluative, and makes pertinent suggestions for future improvement. A representative of the local authority attends every meeting of the IEB in order to gain a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.