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30 October 2015

Mr Jonathan Jones  
Headteacher  
Castlechurch Primary School  
Tennyson Road  
Stafford  
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Dear Mr Jones

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Castlechurch Primary School**

Following my visit with Gill Turner, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 7–8 October 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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.**

This letter and the 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 Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by making sure that all teachers:
  - take account of what pupils already know and can do when teaching, especially more-able pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the quality of work that they produce
  - provide pupils with precise guidance on how to improve their work.
  
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by insisting that teachers:
  - make sure pupils read frequently and support them to develop their fluency and understanding
  - teach pupils how to spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
  - expect pupils to solve harder mathematical problems
  - make sure pupils use and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge in different subjects.
  
- Ensure that all leaders and managers:
  - use accurate information on how well different groups of pupils are doing to compare their progress and provide additional support where needed
  - undertake training to develop the skills they need to check carefully the quality of teaching and pupils' learning
  - contribute to school development plans that identify clearly and specifically what improvements are needed and how they will be achieved, who is going to monitor the actions and how the impact of the actions will be assessed.
  
- Make sure that governors develop their skills so that they can hold leaders and managers to account for pupils' progress.

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

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 7–8 October 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers, the coordinator for special educational needs, subject and phase leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection in March this year, an assistant headteacher has been appointed with responsibility for the early years. Two teachers took up their posts in September.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015 remained below the national average for 2014. The majority of pupils in Year 6, including the high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, made at least expected progress from their different starting points. The headteacher and deputy headteacher closely check the progress of all groups of pupils and regularly review the effectiveness of the support provided. Nevertheless, pupils' progress is not yet accelerating at a sufficient rate for them to catch up with the standards expected for their age.

A high proportion of children achieved good levels of development by the end of the Reception Year in 2015 and were well prepared for the next stage in their education. All judgements were checked by the local authority and found to be consistently accurate. Almost all of the pupils met the standard in the phonics check (the sounds that letters represent) at the end of Year 1. Checks of pupils' reading skills against their chronological age are conducted each term. The number of pupils with reading abilities below those expected for their age is reducing across the school.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching has improved but inconsistencies remain between subjects and classes. Teachers confidently teach reading and phonics. Their approaches ensure that pupils' skills are learned, practised and developed systematically over a period of time. Pupils read more for enjoyment and information, and speak knowledgeably about the different styles of books and the authors they like. Specific reading, writing and mathematical skills are occasionally taught at a point in the morning and then applied later in a different lesson. This practice helps the pupils understand why these skills have to be mastered.

Teachers' checks on pupils' progress and understanding are more accurate and regular. Teachers' questioning in lessons helps them to consider how well the pupils are developing the intended concepts or broadening their knowledge. They adapt their explanations according to the pupils' responses. Tasks are well planned to meet the demands and needs of different ability groups. Pupils receive additional support when needed from adults with suitable skills and expertise.

Pupils are increasingly aware of the different writing features. Although early in the school term, pupils' books show they write for different purposes and apply their writing skills to other subjects such as history. Older pupils try to improve their work by taking their own simple sentences and developing more complex versions using a range of vocabulary to explain or describe. However, pupils are not consistently expected to pay sufficient attention to all aspects of their writing. As a consequence, wrong letter formation, spelling errors and a narrow range of punctuation is evident in pupils' books. Teachers do not methodically identify errors and expect pupils to correct them. As a result, pupils do not always check or proofread their own work, and spelling and punctuation errors persist.

Teachers plan mathematics lessons sequentially to build concepts over time. Pupils learn number facts such as multiplication tables and regularly develop their calculation skills. Pupils have more frequent opportunities to solve basic problems and consider methods to check their own work. However, pupils do not regularly measure, weigh, estimate, compare or solve more complex problems requiring a number of steps. Pupils are beginning to recognise and name two- and three-dimensional shapes but they do not extend their knowledge to measure perimeters or areas or classify shapes according to their properties.

Children's learning is mostly effective in the early years, where teachers have a clear understanding of the children's needs and plan activities to build on prior learning. Occasionally, children are not sufficiently aware of the purpose of the activity and therefore are unable to effectively develop or practise specific skills. Adults are not always used effectively to maintain the pace of children's learning or support their understanding.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils come into school at the start of the day quietly and respectfully. All pupils have positive attitudes to their learning because adults' expectations of them are clear, pupils' effort is praised and in most cases pupils understand the purpose of each task. As a consequence, pupils know what they have to do and why. Pupils work cooperatively in pairs or small groups but can also work individually for extended periods of time. Pupils are engaged in their work, unafraid to get things wrong and show a genuine interest in their learning.

Pupils continue to feel safe in school. They appreciate the marked pathways outside and the rules for walking in corridors. They understand that the rules were made for their safety and as a result they feel valued. Incidents of poor behaviour during playtimes are rare but any concerns are recorded, followed up and tracked over time to consider reoccurrence. At the end of playtime, all pupils stop what they are doing without delay and return sensibly to their classrooms. Pupils know the routines and move smoothly, without fuss, between activities.

The deputy headteacher has provided training for lunchtime supervisors and, as a consequence, the number of minor accidents has reduced. During lunchtimes, pupils chat and play cooperatively. Pupils in Year 6 diligently perform their lunchtime duties and carefully fulfil their responsibilities for younger pupils. They fully understand the expectations placed on them.

Attendance is improving. The headteacher analyses the attendance of different groups and provides targeted support where necessary. Absence is only authorised for exceptional circumstances and parents are required to provide evidence for their occasional requests to take pupils out of school.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

The headteacher's expectations of staff are clear, well communicated and understood by all. The headteacher has distributed leadership responsibilities effectively and by so doing has built a greater capacity for continued improvement. Planned meetings for all staff and staff in each phase help everyone to review how well they are doing and to determine the next steps. Subject and phase leaders display an increasing degree of confidence and less dependence on external support. They have benefited from training and support and now feel confident to try their own new ideas. They regularly check pupils' work, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of support. As a consequence, staff now understand they are responsible and accountable for pupils' achievement.

Phase leaders and teachers review pupils' progress every half term, amend plans and approaches where necessary and provide specific support if needed. Nevertheless, these reviews are not sufficiently frequent to provide targeted, short-term support when pupils' progress stalls or is at risk of falling behind.

The governing body has continued to drive its own improvement. Governors have conducted an audit of their skills so that expertise is identified and fully used. Committees focus sharply on agreed responsibilities, and governors independently seek training to keep up to date and avoid any sense of complacency. For example, they recently commissioned a second external review to further their own development. Governors, leaders and all staff are acutely aware of the link between performance management, the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress. Governors are now more active and they focus on the right priorities. They have

become 'key drivers' in school improvement. All governors keep a close track of the school's performance and rates of improvement. They seek to go 'the extra mile' wherever necessary. They are suitably ambitious and insist on accurate information to track and evaluate the school's progress. Leaders, including governors, have not yet developed a long-term plan to determine realistic ambitions, agree priorities and plan the necessary resources for the school's future.

### **External support**

The local authority has withdrawn the intensive levels of commissioned support. As the school has demonstrated its growing capacity for improvement, the local authority has taken a more evaluative role. The local authority's governor services have provided ongoing support for governors as and when requested. Commissioned support from Entrust was effectively delivered in May this year for writing and mathematics.