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Mrs D Robinson
Headteacher
Richmond Church of England School
Frances Road
Richmond
North Yorkshire
DL10 4NF

Dear Mrs Robinson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Richmond Church of England Primary School

Following my visit, with Alison Aitchison, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6–7 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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:

The school is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire Local Authority and the Director of Education for the Bradford, Ripon and Leeds Church of England Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Gina White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

■ Improve the quality of teaching, marking and feedback so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils in all year groups to be appropriately challenged in all subjects and reach their full potential, by:

- eradicating inadequate teaching
- ensuring teachers take full account of what pupils already know and can do, so that activities challenge them to reach their full potential and sustain their enthusiasm and concentration
- reviewing the school's approaches to the teaching of mathematics
- rapidly improving pupils' literacy, numeracy and reading skills and how they present their work so that they are well prepared to start secondary school when they leave Year 6
- addressing the inconsistencies evident in teachers' marking and feedback so that pupils more readily address their errors and misconceptions.

■ Improve the leadership, management and governance of the school by:

- improving the quality of information that is used to assess and record the school's performance; analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of school initiatives and actions with rigour
- ensuring analyses of the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium, accurately identify individuals and groups of pupils at risk of underachievement; implementing effective actions swiftly to tackle these
- ensuring that middle leaders and teachers clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, and have the appropriate training and professional development to fulfil them
- checking the quality of teaching and learning more closely to ensure all staff meet the expected professional standards and are held to account for closing gaps in pupils' achievement
- ensuring governors provide robust challenge for leaders and carry out and commission their own checks.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6–7 October 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection three teachers have left the school. An assistant headteacher has relinquished their senior leadership responsibilities. The number of pupils on the school roll has reduced to 233. All classes have been reorganised in September 2015 to take account of these changes and leadership responsibilities have been shared amongst the remaining senior leaders

Outcomes for pupils

School data and information show improvements in progress and attainment since the previous inspection. Standards are rising. Work to develop reading, writing and mathematics is having a greater impact on pupils' learning and their progress, particularly in Key Stage 1, Year 5 and Year 6 classes. Pupils are drawing upon their regular reading sessions to support their writing. Pupils' books demonstrate their careful attention to detail and their increasing confidence as writers. For example, in Years 1 and 2 pupils understand and increasingly use descriptive words in their writing, while a more ambitious choice of words adds depth and character to Year 5 writing. Standards of presentation, including written calculations, are improving in response to clearer expectations.

Many more Year 1 pupils reached the national standard in the annual phonics check of how well they know their letters and sounds compared to last year. More pupils in Years 2 and 6 achieved the levels expected of them in national tests in reading writing and mathematics. However, rates of progress remain varied across classes. Many pupils currently in Key Stage 2 have yet to make up for previously weak teaching. The progress of groups of pupils, particularly the most able, those with disabilities and special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged, is beginning to be monitored and reported. However, analysis and the use of performance information are not developed securely for the school to determine whether gaps in the progress and achievement of these groups are closing rapidly. Target setting does not take sufficient account of pupils' progress from their starting points. Consequently, the targets set for some pupils are too low and unrealistically high for others.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Clearer expectations from school leaders, together with a programme of relevant training, are helping teachers to develop new skills and confidence. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is improving. Changes to the way in which writing and mathematics are taught throughout the school have been carefully considered and are contributing to more structured work in lessons. Much of the school's work has focused on developing reading and writing skills. Teachers model writing well and a consistent focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar is evident in all lessons. Teachers in Year 1 are working well together, sharing strategies, resources and literacy groups. This is helping to improve continuity to learning as children make the transition from Reception into Year 1. Most pupils are working on interesting tasks that relate broadly to their next steps as writers. However, across the school, planning for what pupils will learn is not managed well enough to ensure a good balance between challenge and support. Teachers are sometimes too quick to move from support to pupils undertaking independent tasks without ensuring that their skills, understanding and confidence are secure. Some pupils say that they are uncertain about what to do when the support stops. Sometimes work is too easy for some pupils and too hard for others, particularly for the more-able pupils and those with disabilities and special educational needs.

Calculation policies, teaching plans and coaching sessions now provide firmer guidance to teachers. Practical activities and use of equipment are beginning to be used more effectively in mathematics lessons to deepen pupils' understanding of methods, such as column addition. A sharper focus on recording in their books and better questioning by teachers are enabling pupils to spot patterns in calculations. However, work is not always well matched to pupils' ability and teachers are not checking or following up well enough during lessons to ensure that pupils are learning well. For example, in some classes pupils were encouraged to choose a task and to challenge themselves, but some selected easier tasks than the ones they had successfully attempted earlier in the week. High noise levels in lessons and low level disruption slowed learning in some lessons.

Teachers are applying school systems for marking and feedback to pupils. In many classes pupils know what is expected of them and respond to specific points, such as correcting their spellings and calculations.

Pupils who are falling behind and need additional support are receiving it, although the quality and impact varies across the key stages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

On the whole pupils are happy, they enjoy coming to school, feel safe and like their new teachers. Expectations of behaviour, particularly in lessons, are inconsistent across the teaching team. Pupils' inattention, chatter and calling out are not checked quickly enough in some classes and pupils' work rate slows. In some instances the work pupils were set in these classes was too easy or too difficult and they lost interest. Pupils told inspectors that noise levels have increased since the start of term and that behaviour at playtimes has got a little worse. Some pushing, occasional swearing and boisterous play by a small number of pupils made others feel anxious and uncomfortable. Leaders have been slow to recognise that standards of behaviour have started to slip and the initial gains in teaching and learning are at risk if this remains unchecked.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

A greater consistency is emerging to aspects of the school's work as a result of leaders adapting and applying the strategies initially modelled by Poppleton Ousebank Primary School, the school's improvement partner. Expectations of teachers are clearer and a more visible presence of leaders and governors in classrooms and around the school is helping to promote greater accountability. Although leaders have responded to the support they have received, they have taken time to accept the findings of the Section 5 inspection and to assimilate the messages being given by external partners. Delays in developing and implementing school plans has slowed progress in implementing appraisal and the management of teachers' performance and, until very recently, in extending leadership responsibilities more widely throughout the school. Senior leaders and governors recognise that they have not prioritised these aspects sufficiently. Since September, school plans have been strengthened and teaching and learning policies, particularly in mathematics, marking and feedback are being implemented more successfully by subject leaders. However, previously strong aspects of the school's work, such as high expectations of pupils' behaviour are starting to slip and urgent attention is required to ensure this is swiftly remedied.

Governors have invested time in finding out more about the school's work. They have established links to each class, visited school frequently, and regularly asked questions. While this has helped them to understand the changes that are taking place to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, they have been slower in getting to grips with their strategic responsibilities and acting upon the findings from the external reviews of governance and pupil premium. Governors have been uncertain of how and when to challenge the headteacher and assistant headteacher for more detailed information about the school's work and instead they have begun to rely heavily on the local authority adviser's reports. The school has yet to benefit

from the extensive experience of very recent additions to the governing body to drive improvements in these areas.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. Expectations of individuals and schools who provide support to Richmond School are clarified in a 'Memorandum of Understanding'. As a result of these changes, the local authority's expectations of the school are explicit and close checks are being kept on the school's work towards meeting monthly milestones in the statement of action. These checks provide a clear steer for the school and are currently helping to drive improvement. Analysis of data and information by the attached education adviser, together with checks on the accuracy of assessments, are supporting the school's analysis of the progress pupils make. Arrangements for additional support from good and outstanding school leaders, who are experienced in school improvement, are in place to guide the school in its next phase of development.