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Dear Mrs Miller

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Wilfrid's CofE Aided Primary School Northenden

Following my visit to the school on 22–23 March 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 that 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 that took place in May 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Executive Board, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Manchester, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Manchester City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2015.

- Take urgent steps to improve the quality of teaching in all key stages so that it is at least good, in order to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, so that pupils can make good or better progress, by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the disadvantaged, the most able, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
 - making sure that all staff have a clear understanding of what pupils already know and of their learning targets and that they use this information to set challenging work and provide support that is closely matched to the pupils' varying needs and abilities
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils know how and where to improve their work and learn from their mistakes
 - ensuring that all staff use the information from assessing pupils' work to influence the planning of pupils' future learning
 - developing the roles of teaching assistants so that they know precisely what is expected from them in order to effectively support pupils' progress in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use, apply and extend their reading, writing and numeracy skills across the subjects of the curriculum
 - ensuring pupils are taught the range of knowledge and skills in the newly planned curriculum
 - making sure that children in the early years are provided with a clear purpose for learning in the activities they undertake and that activities are challenging and maintain their attention, particularly in reading.

- Urgently improve pupils' safety, behaviour, and attitudes to learning so that they are all at least consistently good, by:
 - strengthening pupils' understanding of how to deal with bullying, including ensuring all pupils know who to turn to if they are concerned, so that they feel safe
 - making sure that incidents of bullying are dealt with and recorded effectively
 - ensuring that parents have confidence in the school's arrangements for keeping their children safe, particularly at the start and end of the school day
 - ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of the school's behaviour policy and develop the skills to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
 - ensuring that all pupils have a clear understanding of the expectations of their good behaviour and that they strive to achieve these
 - encouraging all pupils to take care over the completion and presentation of their work.

- Quickly and sustainably improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - significantly strengthening the leaders’ and governors’ partnership with parents so that they have confidence in the school and so that their concerns, including those relating to their children’s safety, are fully addressed
 - taking steps to carefully plan and manage the many and continual changes of staff, including temporary staff, in order to minimise the negative impact of these changes on the quality of teaching, pupils’ achievement and their behaviour and safety
 - establishing rigorous and accurate systems to regularly check on pupils’ progress, including any variances in the achievement of different groups of pupils, so that underachievement is swiftly identified and acted upon and pupils catch up quickly
 - improving arrangements to check on the quality of teaching so that they are regular and robust, and using these findings to improve teaching quickly
 - strengthening the school’s ability to improve at a good rate by addressing weaknesses in middle leadership and developing leaders’ roles, particularly in checking that pupils are gaining the knowledge and skills that they need to improve their work
 - making sure that leaders, including governors, check that the use of the pupil premium is effective and that gaps in the achievement of pupils across the school, and with other pupils nationally, are closed quickly.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 to 23 March 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed teaching in each class and conducted a large number of joint observations with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, both assistant headteachers and the executive headteacher designate. The inspector conducted, with senior leaders, a joint scrutiny of pupils' books. He met with a range of staff including the newly qualified teachers that were appointed before the school went into special measures. He also met with two members of the interim executive board (IEB), a representative of the local authority and of the diocese.

The inspector looked at a range of documentation including the school's improvement plans, checks on teachers' work and records of attendance and behaviour.

Context

There have been a few changes since the last monitoring inspection. The associate headteacher, as planned, returned to Crossacres Primary School at the end of Christmas. A deputy headteacher from another school has been seconded to work at St Wilfrid's until the end of the summer, enabling Mrs Miller to continue as acting headteacher. A teacher is absent with a long-term illness and her class is being taught by a supply teacher until Easter.

The proposed transition to an academy is at an advanced stage. The Saint James and Emmanuel Academy Trust has consulted parents and is in a position to submit its proposals to the Secretary of State for Education. The trust is already working closely with the school and the IEB, and the executive headteacher designate has started to work closely with senior leaders, the staff and parents.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

St Wilfrid's has made so much progress since the full inspection in May 2015 that, in many ways, the report does not now reflect the school's current position. The effectiveness of teaching, the provision for the youngest children, pupils' behaviour and pupils' outcomes, particularly in mathematics, have all improved. The school is close to the removal of special measures.

The main reason for the change in the school's fortune is the highly effective work of the acting headteacher. She has successfully and relentlessly pursued the areas for improvement identified at the last monitoring inspection in addition to the original points for improvement identified in May 2015. The school's plans for improvement were not fit for purpose at the last monitoring inspection. They have improved significantly and leaders have made very clear exactly how improvements

will be made. Importantly, the actions have been backed up by extensive and targeted training for staff and time for staff to reflect on, implement and embed changes. The desired improvements have also been backed up by a successful system of checking on the quality of teaching. Observations of lessons and checks on pupils' work, mainly in English and mathematics, are frequent and there is a clear purpose to the checks. When senior leaders revisit classes, they focus and comment on previously identified strengths and points for development and they clearly identify each member of staff's progress.

The capacity of the school to improve itself is increasing rapidly. The new deputy headteacher and existing assistant headteachers have an accurate view of teaching in lessons, which means they are able to provide accurate points for improvement to each teacher and see this through into subsequent observations. This has helped to improve teaching across the school and provision in the early years. Teachers who lead subjects have been less involved in this process and there has been less checking on the quality of teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics. This should be the next step for the school to take.

The school's leaders have rewritten the safeguarding and the equality and diversity policies. Both now meet government requirements and set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of different members of the school. There is now an effective system in place to make sure policies are written and reviewed within required timescales. Crucially, the policies are owned, used, evaluated and changed by staff to reflect current practice. As a result, they are consistently applied. Although the website still does not meet the government's information requirements, a new format is close to becoming live with the necessary policies, information and documents. At present there is no evaluation of the impact of the government's physical education and sport premium and the curriculum does not set out well enough what each year group is learning in each subject. The curriculum is not developed well enough to show progression in key subject-specific skills such as chronology in history, mapping in geography and investigation in science.

The school's most recent internal survey of parents suggests the dissatisfaction registered on Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) has been replaced by a good level of satisfaction with the school's work. Approximately a third of parents responded in March 2016 and agreed that their children are safe, well looked after, are making progress and are being taught well. A much larger proportion of parents would now recommend the school to others. The quality of, and detail contained in, newsletters to parents has improved significantly. The acting headteacher remains highly visible and accessible to parents and there has been a re-establishment of the parents' association. Parents have been consulted about the proposed transition to an academy and have chances to voice their views at workshops, coffee mornings and parents' evenings.

Joint working with other schools in the Saint James and Emmanuel Trust has begun. The schools are working together on a shared ethos and vision, on a shared

assessment system and on moderating staff's judgements about the attainment and progress of pupils. The acting headteacher is still aware that improvements need to be made so that senior leaders can check quickly on the performance of groups of pupils. At present, the system is cumbersome and involves a lot of time and a calculator.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Across the school, teachers have higher expectations of pupils' abilities in English and mathematics. This was evident in Year 6 where pupils were being asked a series of complex trigonometry and geometry questions leading them to calculate missing angles successfully and quickly. It was also evident in one of the Nursery classes where children were asked to accurately count four Easter eggs and then add them to five other eggs to find the total amount.

Problem solving in mathematics has a much higher profile than previously; in fact it features in every lesson. Teachers spend more of the lesson time asking pupils to reason mathematically. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, pupils wrote down a fraction and then matched it to the correct fraction depicted in a wide range of pictures including measures and shapes. They then wrote an explanation as to why they thought it matched the fraction using correct mathematical language. There is still some work to be done to make sure every adult uses correct mathematical vocabulary and has the subject knowledge to be able to teach mathematics as well as they can.

There are also examples of high expectations in other subjects. Reception children, for example, decided on aspects that were a necessity for life such as air, or something that would be desirable, such as toys. They then discussed with gusto whether more contentious aspects of life would also be a necessity to life, such as love and money. Children were expected to explain their thinking and to think deeply. This example is also an indicator of the improvement in teaching in the early years. Children are mostly involved in purposeful activities. There is still some way to go, however, to make sure the activities are challenging enough and enable different children to increase their knowledge and skills.

Most teachers assess well during lessons and, crucially, adapt their lessons in light of pupils' errors or strengths, leading them to make progress in their work. They give pupils quick and useful feedback enabling them to improve their work. In an English lesson for example, pupils struggled to complete an opening paragraph in a diary entry so the teacher skilfully used their work to improve their writing and their use of grammatical phrases and extend their vocabulary.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The improvement to pupils' behaviour and welfare has continued. In most lessons pupils were keen, responsive to the teacher or teaching assistant and cooperated well with each other regardless of gender, ethnicity or age. This allowed pupils to make progress because they concentrated on their activities, persevered and listened intently to instructions and teachers' demonstrations.

In a few classes pupils' off-task behaviour slowed their learning and prevented the adults from being able to concentrate on their teaching. These behaviours included fidgeting on the carpet, calling out and playing inappropriately with equipment. In most classes the adults dealt well with poorer behaviour but the time taken to redirect pupils slowed up their teaching.

The school's records indicate that there have been fewer behaviour or bullying incidents in the spring term and fewer pupils are involved. The effort to improve the ethos and culture in the school is yielding results and there are demonstrable signs of pupils being polite and friendly to each other and showing a growing respect for each other's differences.

Outcomes for pupils

An analysis of pupils' work indicates they are making faster progress in writing and mathematics than last term. They are writing in more complex and accurate sentences and have improved their use of punctuation. They have opportunities to write in other subjects such as history but their writing lacks the detail and quality that they produce in English lessons. In Year 1, linked to higher teacher expectations, pupils wrote accurately in the past tense describing events during the great fire of London. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make tangible gains in their knowledge and understanding.

Pupils' work in science and geography does not reflect their mathematical and English skills. Similarly their work also indicates there is too much focus on the 'topic' rather than the development of subject skills and knowledge, particularly in history, geography and science.

External support

The high-quality external support has continued. The diocese has worked with leaders to reset and reshape the school's mission and its ethos. Staff, pupils, parents and governors have all been involved in its construction and it is having an impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

Staff have worked with external mathematics consultants and with St Mary's to improve teaching in mathematics. As a result there are more problems and

reasoning activities in lessons, greater use of visual images and improved opportunities to reason mathematically.

The local authority has brokered the employment of the acting deputy headteacher from Barlow Hall Primary School, Chorlton, and has brokered training from St Mary's Primary School in Moss Side. It has provided specialist guidance for teachers and leaders through joint observations of lessons. As a result of the support, teaching has improved and so has the school's capacity to improve.