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Mrs Anne Radford
Executive Headteacher
Our Lady and St Philomena's Catholic Primary School
Sparrow Hall Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L9 6BU

Dear Mrs Radford

Special measures monitoring inspection of Our Lady and St Philomena's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Neil Mackenzie Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 29 and 30 September, 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 September 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:

The school is not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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 Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2014.

- Take urgent steps to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is at least good, in order to raise standards for all groups of pupils in all key stages, so that they can make good or better progress by:
 - ensuring that the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are taught consistently well in all classes, including in the early years, with a focus on improving writing in particular
 - raising teachers' expectations regarding the progress pupils should make, especially for disadvantaged pupils
 - using information about what pupils know and can do to set work that is suitably difficult, especially for the most able, and which helps them to learn well
 - ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to respond to teachers' marking and to improve their work themselves
 - planning work which pupils find interesting and challenging so as to improve their concentration and attitudes to learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels including governance by:
 - establishing rigorous systems to measure the performance of staff and the impact they have on raising standards for pupils and ensure that governors hold leaders to account for doing so
 - ensuring that planned improvement is rapid and keeps to tight timescales
 - setting up procedures to check that assessments of pupils' skills and knowledge are accurate
 - ensuring rigorous and specific targets are set for individual pupils which accelerate the progress of those who are underachieving so that they catch up quickly
 - regularly checking on the progress that all different groups of pupils make and taking swift action if any group are not achieving as well as they should.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
 - ensuring teaching is stimulating and motivates pupils well so that they develop good attitudes to learning
 - ensuring all teachers have the skills to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
 - improving record keeping so that systems are rigorous and all incidents of poor behaviour are noted along with the impact of any action taken in order to prevent reoccurrence.
- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - ensuring that work with families to reduce absence is effective
 - checking and analysing patterns of absence in relation to specific groups, especially disadvantaged pupils, and using this information to identify the specific actions needed to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils that are frequently absent.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

At the last monitoring visit, on 2 and 3 July 2015, Her Majesty's Inspector also advised leaders and managers:

- as a matter of urgency, to ensure that the administration and recording of information that is necessary to keep pupils safe, especially records of incidents and misbehaviour, is robust and accurate.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 September 2015

Evidence

As a result of safeguarding concerns, the focus of this inspection was primarily on the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils, as well as the effectiveness of the school's leaders in ensuring that all pupils are kept safe. The school was inspected very recently in July 2015 and issues relating to outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching and learning highlighted in that report remain relevant today. Her Majesty's Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised a wide range of school and associated documentation linked to behaviour and safety and special educational needs, including the local authority's recent safeguarding review. Her Majesty's Inspectors met with the headteacher and seconded deputy headteacher as well as with most of the teaching and ancillary staff. In addition, discussions were held with three groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority. Informal discussions were also held over the course of the two days with pupils, parents and staff. The inspectors toured the site, accompanied by the executive headteacher and caretaker, to check on site security and whether the school environment was safe and conducive to learning. No formal lesson observations took place, since this was not the focus of this monitoring visit, but inspectors visited lessons to look primarily at the behaviour of pupils. Pupils were also observed in everyday situations around the school as well as at break times and lunchtimes.

Context

The headteacher resigned on the 17 September with effect from the 25 September 2015. A new executive head teacher has been appointed and she took up post the day before this inspection. Two teachers have left the school since the last inspection and one new appointment has been made. Currently, two classes are being taught by temporary staff.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that a serious incident which occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to guide inspectors' judgements.

Outcomes for pupils

The findings of the recent third monitoring visit published on the 22 July 2015 still apply. There is little evidence to show that achievement is improving and it remains inconsistent between classes and groups of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Similarly, the findings in the previous report regarding the quality of teaching and learning still apply. Teaching continues to require considerable improvement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

There are serious failings in how the school safeguards its pupils.

The school environment is not pleasant or conducive to learning. In most cases, classrooms are uninviting, cluttered and untidy. There are few up-to-date displays of pupils' work and those found in corridors are jaded and, in some cases, damaged. Quite a few areas of the school are in a poor state of repair. Clutter and debris in many rooms and cupboards creates an environment which looks uncared for and can be a hazard for pupils. In the library, for example, books are scattered across shelves or piled upon the floor and there is no sense of order. Such an unwelcoming and chaotic environment does not encourage pupils to enjoy reading or care for books in their possession. Electrical cables and telephone lines in some classrooms are trip hazards and add to the unsightly environment. There are also concerns about the safety of the outside environment. Wire fencing around the enclosed play area where pupils play football is damaged and ripped. Pupils could easily cut themselves badly on it. The climbing and balance equipment is sited too close to concrete surfaces, which could be a hazard to pupils who slip or fall. The few resources available are not of sufficiently good quality to stimulate constructive and meaningful play at breaktimes and lunchtimes, especially for the younger pupils. Adult supervision is lax. Pupils interviewed reported that they can feel intimidated by some boys who behave badly and can bully others. A small number of pupils repeatedly misbehave, particularly at lunchtimes. Pupils described regularly having to draw the attention of lunchtime supervisors to rough and often intimidating behaviour.

On the positive side, satisfactory procedures are in place to ensure that especially vulnerable pupils are kept safe. The school responds quickly and well when particular issues are drawn to their attention. It works well with other schools and agencies to support individual pupils and effectively resolve any concerns. Prompt and accurate action is taken when anyone raises concerns about a pupil. Information about these pupils is sufficiently well organised to ensure that any necessary action is taken.

Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe when taking part in off-site and educational visits are inadequate. The needs of individual pupils, such as those with specific medical conditions, are not communicated clearly enough to all supervisory adults. In the past, pupils have been taken out of school without adequate risk assessments having taken place. The new executive headteacher recognised this

concern immediately and cancelled a visit due to take place during the week of the inspection because it had not been well prepared.

The register of pupils with medical conditions and allergies has not been kept up to date. Teachers were not able to identify all the pupils in their care who had medical conditions or who were on medication. There are no facilities to store medicines out of reach of children in the classrooms or in store cupboards. Inspectors identified medicines inadequately stored in boxes on the floor of storerooms. The new executive headteacher has immediately ordered medicine storage cabinets for all classrooms and the register is being updated.

There are satisfactory evacuation procedures from classrooms in the event of fire, but there is a lack of clarity about the procedure for checking if anybody has been left in the building. Fire alarms are checked regularly but fire drills are not a regular part of the safeguarding process. Teachers could not recall with any conviction whether these had occurred, or when.

The reporting of behaviour incidents and accidents has increased in frequency since this was raised as an issue during the last inspection. Although recording has improved, there is still little evidence of how incidents have been followed up and there is no analysis of patterns of misbehaviour. The school has not used the information it has gathered in its records to decide how to tackle the problem more effectively. Teachers still have difficulties in managing pupils' behaviour, even in some classes where numbers are very small. In too many classes, the behaviour of boys is poor and slows learning. Inspectors observed boys quickly losing concentration, fidgeting and distracting others.

Pupils interviewed were very clear about what they would do if they, or a friend, were concerned or felt unsafe. Pupils identified who they would talk to and are confident that appropriate action would be taken by teachers. These pupils were also very clear about how to keep themselves safe when using computers or social media.

The single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, covering all staff and others identified by the school as having regular contact with children, meets national requirements.

On the positive side, the procedures introduced since the start of term to monitor and improve attendance are now much better organised. They are beginning to have an impact, although poor attendance is still an issue. Action to chase up pupils who are absent is prompt. Lateness is being noted and challenged. During the inspection, it was refreshing to see that a pupil, absent in the morning, was in school for the afternoon session because her absence had been chased up. The key member of staff is knowledgeable and is setting clear expectations for pupils, parents and staff. She is aware of the link between good attendance and the need to keep pupils safe.

Long-term absence is also pursued and investigated. Hopefully these strategies will have an impact and attendance will begin to improve.

Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is currently disorganised and dysfunctional. Individual educational plans for these pupils are being reviewed, but this is taking place without discussion with pupils and parents. Too many staff have been tardy in returning draft plans to the special educational needs coordinator by the set deadline, which has long passed. It is now four weeks into the term and the school has not ensured that active plans are in place for these pupils. This lack of urgency reflects the prevalent casual culture of the school. Record keeping is chaotic and not secure. Incidents are not being logged and recorded. There are no protocols in place and there few effective checks and little sharing of information. Training for staff is haphazard and currently ineffective.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

School leaders and governors have not met their statutory duty to ensure that all pupils in their care are safe and secure. They have not established a culture in the school that places high enough priority on safeguarding. Currently, there is a lack of rigour in implementing safeguarding measures across the school. The school's organisation to secure pupils' safety is poor and this disorganisation also reflects the general lack of urgency and accountability that has pervaded the school for far too long.

Neither teachers nor support staff have received appropriate safeguarding training of sufficient quality. Mid-day supervisory staff reported that they had not received any recent relevant training. Training sessions have relayed information to staff and raised awareness but failed to make sure that there was in-depth understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and processes. Several staff, when interviewed, stated that safeguarding is just 'common sense'. This identifies a lack of real understanding or importance of safeguarding and the complexities involved. Staff have very limited understanding of the 'Prevent' agenda (the strategy which promotes fundamental British values and promotes pupils' safety from dangers including radicalisation and extremism) and how this applies to their school. However, all staff are aware of the name of the designated person for safeguarding.

Various policies linked to safeguarding have recently been produced. These have not yet been approved by the governing body and, as a result, are not yet being consistently implemented throughout the school.

The curriculum currently does not support safeguarding well. There is no systematic programme for personal and social education that allows pupils to think and learn about issues such as personal safety, health and positive behaviour. Currently, pupils have few opportunities in the teaching programme to develop their self-esteem,

personal beliefs, moral values and recognise and gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures.

The new executive headteacher is well aware of the problems she faces. She is determined to turn the school round and in her first week she has already begun to make changes and improvements. There are now more stringent measures in place to ensure that pupils are kept secure and safe, especially the youngest and most vulnerable. For example, the two gates with access to the nursery and reception classes are now locked and can only be opened by the staff on duty. There are now specified times for parents to drop off and collect pupils. Pupils are now released to the care of their parents or a known adult one at a time and an adult supervises the individual transfer of a child to their parent.

External support

The school continues to rely heavily on local authority support to function effectively. The local authority, in partnership with the archdiocese, moved rapidly to ensure that a new executive head teacher was appointed following the sudden resignation of the headteacher. This early appointment has ensured that there has been no gap in the leadership of the school. The local authority also responded promptly to the recommendation by Her Majesty's Inspector at the end of the monitoring visit in July that a focused review of safeguarding was carried out as a matter of urgency. This was completed at the beginning of September and is very detailed. The recommendations from the local authority's report provide a clear agenda for the school to remedy weaknesses in safeguarding.

Priorities for further improvement:

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that safeguarding requirements are rigorous and effective and that all staff receive high-quality and relevant training to enable them to carry out their safeguarding duties responsibly.