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Mrs B M Price
Executive Headteacher
Richmond Church of England Primary School
Frances Road
Richmond
North Yorkshire
DL10 4NF

Dear Mrs Price

Special measures monitoring inspection of Richmond Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Karen Holmes, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 May 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, the regional schools commissioner, and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that 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 third monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 May 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, middle leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, and parents. Inspectors also met with governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Considerable changes in the leadership and management of the school have taken place since the previous monitoring inspection. The headteacher left the school in March 2016, a member of the senior leadership team stepped down during the autumn term and the school business manager left in spring 2016. These positions have been filled very recently. An executive headteacher is leading the school and had been in post for 14 days at the time of the inspection. A new chair of the governing body was elected in March 2016. The number of pupils on the school roll has reduced since the inspection in January 2015 to 237.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders and governors have been slow to develop leadership more widely across the school. Responsibilities and accountability have not been delegated fully, and the roles of senior leaders and subject leaders are still underdeveloped. Those with leadership positions have not been held fully to account through the new systems of performance management introduced in autumn 2015. The planned programme of checks on the quality and impact of the school's work slipped following the illness and departure of the headteacher and as other leaders within the school focused on managing their teaching responsibilities. During this period, the school's information was not evaluated thoroughly. Leaders and governors have not ensured that teachers use information effectively to plan work that challenges the most able pupils and close gaps in learning for others. Until very recently, increasing pupil absence rates have gone unchecked. In contrast to the inertia demonstrated during the latter part of the autumn and spring terms, the executive headteacher has, in the very short time that she has been in school, identified the problem and is working with outside agencies and parents to put solutions in place.

Governors have not responded decisively to address the issues identified at the previous inspection. Since the last monitoring visit, the balance between governors' support and challenge has at times erred too much on support for leaders and staff at the expense of championing pupils' achievement. Delays in implementing school plans have slowed the school's improvement and governors have not kept plans under close enough review. The current chair of the governing body is passionate for pupils to receive the best education possible. She has acted quickly, in association with the local authority and diocese, to secure an interim headteacher.

Although they are at a very early stage, sound plans are beginning to be formulated. Changes to governance to improve accountability in the use and impact of pupil premium funding and the progress of key groups of pupils, such as the most able and those who have special educational needs or disability, are being discussed. Ideas, plans and intentions have yet to translate into secure changes and benefits for these groups of pupils. Consequently, the capacity for improvement is not securely demonstrated.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Most teachers are confidently implementing strategies to support the teaching of reading and writing skills and mathematical concepts. However, teachers' expectations of pupils and the quality and quantity of work remain inconsistent across the school. The strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment have changed little since the previous monitoring visit. Infrequent checks on teaching have not helped to tackle the weaker aspects or to share strengths and effective practice swiftly throughout the school.

Effective questioning to engage pupils' interest and check their understanding is developing more securely in mathematics than in other subjects. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are developing well and they are given time to explain their reasoning or demonstrate their methods in most classes. There is evidence of marking and feedback improving pupils' written work, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

Assessment information in writing and mathematics is not used well enough to plan learning and challenge the most and least able pupils. In some classes, all pupils are given the same tasks and some find the work too easy. In other classes, pupils' progress slowed when they were given more work of the same level that did not deepen or extend their learning. Parents feel that teaching should challenge and push their children a little more.

Additional adults and support staff are used well in early years, Year 1 and Year 5 classes to support learning for individuals and groups of pupils. This is because teachers identify pupils' next steps sharply to ensure that staff provide appropriate challenge. However, this extensive resource is not directed well enough by teachers in most other classes. Information about specific groups, such as those who have special educational needs or disability and those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, is not used effectively to inform planning and accelerate pupils' progress. Despite the extensive additional support these groups receive, its effect over time is minimal.

Children's language, communication and numeracy skills are developing quickly and securely in Nursery and Reception classes due to extensive and well-planned opportunities to develop and practise these skills. Strengths in this area of the school's work have been maintained since the inspection in January 2015.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Most teachers have increased their expectations of pupils' behaviour and act quickly to tackle inattention and misbehaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils are following the rules and behaviour is improving. Behavioural incidents have reduced significantly over the last two terms. Pupils listen carefully and they work cooperatively with each other when required to do so. They show commitment to tasks and complete them even though they are not always challenging. In Years 5 and 6, additional mathematics sessions to enable pupils to catch up on aspects they are less confident about are proving popular. Several pupils have chosen to refer themselves, reflecting their desire to improve and to achieve well.

Pupils' attendance continues to be below average. A third of pupils are persistently absent, and many of them are supported through the pupil premium funding. Until very recently, limited work has taken place to identify barriers to their full attendance and to implement strategies to tackle the problem.

Outcomes for pupils

The school is developing its assessment systems and is working to ensure that data is accurate and moderated. Teachers' end-of-year predictions for all classes, if achieved, would see the school achieving its targets in all key stages. Despite the positive trend in school data, rates of progress in writing and mathematics remain varied in lessons and in pupils' books. Scrutiny of books shows that pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are learning more widely across the subject and gaps in knowledge and understanding are starting to close. Older pupils are making sensible use of opportunities to 'review or relearn' aspects of mathematics and are securely developing confidence and skills.

Language and sounds are modelled well by adults in early years and Year 1 classes and pupils are making good progress. Children listen and are engaged in learning and sustain a high level of concentration in reading and communication tasks. Spelling and the use of grammar are developing more firmly in Years 1 and 2 than in other year groups in response to a more coherent approach to teaching these skills. Strengths in reading, handwriting and presentation of work have been sustained through regular practice.

In all classes, disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for pupil premium support and those who have special educational needs or disability are not moving on to the next level or stage of reading, writing or mathematics quickly enough. This is because of inconsistencies in teaching or poor attendance. Gaps between them and their peers within school are widening. Where the school is putting support in place to assist pupils in overcoming barriers to learning, it is not reviewing its impact swiftly enough to secure improvement. The most able pupils and those in Years 3 and 4 are making slower progress due to weaknesses in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.

External support

Structured support at a key time from the local authority and local schools has helped to fill a critical gap in leadership and to assist the school in moving forward to develop the quality of teaching. Teachers are applying what they have learned from coaching sessions to develop their teaching. The local authority recognises the need to quicken the pace of improvement and is working purposefully with partners, including the diocese, to support the school during its transition to become an academy.