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Karen Ridett
St Francis Catholic and Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Newport Road
Ventnor
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Dear Karen Ridett

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Francis Catholic and Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Following my visit with Catherine Old, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 June 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2016.

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection following consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Portsmouth (Anglican) and the director of education for the diocese of Portsmouth (Catholic), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2016

- Urgently improve safeguarding arrangements, including in the early years, by:
 - ensuring the safeguarding policy meets statutory requirements
 - training all staff in the required areas of safeguarding, including the prevention of extremism and radicalisation
 - improving the effectiveness of monitoring of safeguarding information and procedures.

- Improve the impact of leaders and governors by:
 - accurately identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses
 - ensuring additional funds are being used effectively to meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring the school's website meets statutory requirements
 - raising staff awareness of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and how to meet pupils' needs effectively
 - monitoring the attendance of all groups of pupils
 - developing the role of middle leaders
 - raising staff expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve well in all subjects by:
 - making sure teachers are held to account for the progress of groups of pupils
 - ensuring activities build more effectively on what pupils already know
 - improving the standard of pupils' handwriting and pride in the presentation of their work
 - ensuring time is well used in lessons and that pupils are engaged by their learning
 - improving the quality of phonics teaching in early years.

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.

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

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 29 June 2016 to 30 June 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and met with staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors visited seven lessons, several jointly with the acting headteacher, looked at a sample of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

Inspectors met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, two representative of the local authority and a representative from the Portsmouth and Winchester Diocesan Academies Trust.

Inspectors reviewed the school's website, and scrutinised the single central record and a range of documents related to safeguarding. The lead inspector spoke to a few parents during the course of the inspection to seek their views about the school. Inspectors took account of the school's own information about pupils and evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school improvement plan.

Context

Since the inspection, three governors have left and four have joined the governing body.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher is leading the school with determination and high levels of commitment. She shows steadiness, resilience and quiet authority in bringing about improvements and managing the school through its transition to academy status. She commands the confidence of the governors, the local authority, parents and staff and is building leadership capacity at the school. The acting deputy headteacher, inclusion leader, mathematics subject leader, early years coordinator and family liaison officer are all contributing to leading improvement at the school.

Since the inspection, officers from the local authority and both the Anglican and Catholic dioceses have worked together to improve governance. The recommendations of the review of governance, conducted in 2015, have now been enacted. The chair of the governing body has been steadfast throughout a challenging period and provided stability. The four governors who have recently joined the governing body bring welcome experience and expertise. They display a secure knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Following a review of pupil premium expenditure, they know how this additional funding is spent and are clear that there needs to be a greater evaluation

of its impact. Governors are now challenging school leaders more rigorously and this is leading to a sharper focus on monitoring actions to check they are being effective.

However, governors' ability to hold leaders firmly to account is limited by the lack of fully aspirational targets and milestones in the school improvement plan and statement of action from the local authority. Both plans describe many appropriate actions required to raise standards rapidly. However, the success indicators for each year group against which progress can be judged at clear stages are currently too low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Governors and school leaders have recognised this and have plans to address this shortcoming.

Plans that focus on improving outcomes in early years and in English and mathematics underpin the school improvement plan. They are being used effectively to improve teaching and learning and share good practice. Senior and middle leaders responsible for writing and delivering these plans have benefited from coaching by local authority advisers and are challenging and supporting teachers confidently and effectively. Lesson plans and pupils' work are now checked more regularly to see how well pupils' learning needs are being met. In common with strategic school plans, these operational plans would benefit from success criteria that describe high expectations of pupils' progress.

Safeguarding is now effective. There has been a marked improvements in this aspect of the school's work. Arrangements for recruiting and training staff have been strengthened and the policy has been updated to meet the most recent guidance. Staff show high levels of care for pupils and maintain a good culture of safeguarding in the school.

The school's website has been updated but does not yet meet requirements on the publication of specified information because it lacks some of the required information about governance.

Officers from the local authority and both the Anglican and Catholic dioceses have worked together well to prepare for transition to academy status. Plans are proceeding steadily.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is improving because leaders are providing support and useful guidance for staff. Leaders have devised a more sophisticated way of assessing what pupils can do using more regular informal assessments. For example, in English pupils are set work based on their different starting points, which is then assessed by teachers. Pupils improve their initial attempts based on feedback they receive. Teachers use the information they gain about what pupils now know, understand and can do, to plan the next steps in learning. Pupils like this form of assessment as they were able to explain how they had made progress. Regular meetings between

leaders and teachers check how well each pupil in the class is progressing and this holds teachers to account more robustly. This detailed information is used to plan the next stages in pupils' learning, including steps to improve attendance, if necessary.

Teachers have ensured that pupils have improved their learning habits and are engaged by the activities offered. Pupils are now able to self-reflect and self-correct because teachers explain what they are learning clearly. Inspectors saw Year 6 pupils voluntarily using a dictionary to make sure that their writing was accurate, while a group of boys worked cooperatively to help each other find more interesting words to use. In Year 4 mathematics, pupils were intrigued by their exploration of symmetry and tasks set were well matched to pupils' different starting points. Although generally pupils are working purposefully during lessons, sometimes teachers do not consistently check when pupils are ready to move on, and this is slowing the progress of some, especially the most able.

In Reception Year, teachers and support staff questioned children skilfully to explain their thinking as they pursued their project on superheroes. This included investigating which materials would make a good cloak, finding the best words to describe their favourite heroes and using different senses to identify objects. Children regularly sounded out the words they were writing to check they had spelled them correctly. This confident use of phonics to guide their writing was also used by pupils in Year 1.

Most teachers have higher expectations and have improved their practice as a result of implementing recent training led by middle leaders. Teachers have been evaluating each other's marking, and books show that written feedback is often now linked more precisely to learning aims, in accordance with the school's policy. When pupils are given the opportunity to respond to the advice in a timely way, this is helping them to improve their work. Year 4 pupils told inspectors that teachers had been making them improve their spelling and handwriting, and some evidence of this was seen in books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour has improved since the inspection and they have become more engaged with their learning. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They behave cooperatively in lessons and move around school in a calm and orderly way. Incidents of disruptive behaviour during lessons are rare and, if they do occur, they are managed increasingly successfully. This improved behaviour is due to raised expectations, as seen in lessons and reported by pupils, who told inspectors 'we get more learning done' because 'teachers sort it out'.

Some vulnerable pupils are being supported and managed very well, which is helping to increase their rates of progress. The family liaison officer (FLO) and emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) work closely with families and other

agencies to enable pupils to receive the necessary support. Some older pupils told inspectors how much they appreciated the work done by the FLO and ELSA to help them overcome difficulties. As a result of the effective work of the FLO and ELSA, over half of the pupils whose attendance was poor at the last inspection are now attending more regularly. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' achievement has risen in some areas. The proportion of children in Reception who are on course to achieve a good level of development in 2016 is higher than in 2015. More pupils in key stage 1 are reaching the standards expected for their age in phonics.

In Year 2, work moderated by the local authority shows that attainment at the end of key stage 1 is higher than last year. Since the inspection, there has been a rapid improvement in pupils' progress, particularly by disadvantaged pupils. There is now no difference between their attainment and that of other pupils in reading and writing, but a small gap remains in mathematics.

In all year groups, pupils' rates of progress are increasing because teaching is improving. In Years 5 and 6, the focus on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils during lessons and the provision of effective interventions have helped this group catch up and progress rapidly. However, in Year 3 and Year 4, not enough disadvantaged pupils are making sufficient progress, partly due to significant gaps in their knowledge that have not yet been filled. In key stage 2, pupils' attainment in writing is lower than in reading and mathematics. A new approach to writing introduced throughout the school at the beginning of the year is beginning to show a positive impact and has contributed to improved outcomes in Year 2. In all year groups, there needs to be more challenge for the most able pupils.

External support

The local authority has provided effective challenge and support to the school. Local authority advisers have improved the skills of school leaders and made a positive difference to the quality of teaching. The acting headteacher has benefited from the support of a local learning partner. The school receives helpful and accurate feedback from local authority officers about aspects of leadership, teaching and learning. This contributes well to the development of senior leaders' ability to help the school to improve.

Local authority governor services helpfully contributed to the reformed governing body. There has been most welcome cooperation between the local authority and both the Anglican and Catholic dioceses to steer the school on its journey of improvement and also towards becoming an academy. A revised specification for the role of headteacher is about to be applied to the imminent search for a substantive post holder.

Plans are in place for the school to join the Portsmouth and Winchester Diocesan Academies Trust. An officer from the trust has been working closely and effectively with the acting headteacher to support the transition to academy status, including chairing a parent's forum to inform families and respond to concerns they may have.