

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 March 2017

Mrs Jayne Clarke
St Oswald's Church of England Primary Academy
Cross Lane
Great Horton
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 3JT

Dear Mrs Clarke

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Oswald's Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 March 2017, 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 July 2016. 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Swiftly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least consistently good across all subjects by:
 - increasing expectations of what pupils can do so these are consistently high
 - setting work that matches the needs and abilities of pupils and challenges them appropriately
 - making sure that pupils of all abilities present their work neatly and take pride in their work
 - skilfully questioning pupils to probe and deepen their understanding
 - assessing pupils' learning to adjust work appropriately if they are not making good progress.
- Rapidly improve outcomes for all groups of pupils to make sure that they are at least good by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress so that attainment is at least average in reading, writing and mathematics
 - closing gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally
 - deepening pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects, especially science, history, geography and modern foreign languages
 - expecting pupils to write at length in a wide range of subjects to deepen their knowledge
 - strengthening the application of mathematics across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve the provision in the early years so that:
 - children can access more reading, writing and number activities in the outdoor area
 - boys are engaged more effectively in learning so that their progress in reading, writing and mathematical skills improves at a faster rate.
- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership at all levels by making sure that:
 - teachers' knowledge is strengthened to secure good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and across a wide range of subjects for all groups of pupils
 - teachers are sufficiently skilled to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs met and make good

progress

- subject leaders ensure that the school’s policy on marking is applied and incisive feedback is provided to which pupils respond in detail so they improve their work
- subject leaders check pupils’ work thoroughly to ensure that teachers are assessing pupils’ work accurately in all subjects
- pupils’ attendance is at least average and persistent absenteeism is below average
- pupils’ attitudes to learning are consistently positive with all the adults who teach them
- pupil premium funding is used effectively to strengthen the attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- senior leaders ensure that governors are provided with reliable information to make informed decisions.

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.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 March 2017 to 9 March 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, a range of school leaders, a group of pupils, two representatives of the academy transformation board, and the chief executive officer and primary director of the multi-academy trust.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the governing body has been restructured to create a smaller sub-group known as the academy transformation board (ATB) that reports directly to the board of trustees. The original governing body, which includes all four ATB members, is now known as the advisory group. There have been significant changes to the school's staffing arrangements. The multi-academy trust appointed an executive headteacher in November 2016. The headteacher left the school in January 2017. Two newly qualified teachers left and two new ones, who were appointed prior to the school going into special measures, have joined. A new assistant headteacher has recently been appointed and will take up his full-time post in April 2017. At the time of the monitoring inspection, two teachers who are also part of the leadership team were absent due to illness. Leadership roles have been redefined to take account of the recent staffing changes.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The urgency with which leaders have responded to the special measures judgement has been hindered by the changes in leadership and turnover of staff. However, the appointment of an executive headteacher has meant that actions are now beginning to gather pace.

The school's improvement plan sets out clearly the actions to drive improvement. Subject leaders have been supported to develop their own action plans to give detail to the whole-school overview and this means that leaders are focused on what they need to do and can now be held accountable for the impact of their leadership. A new, longer term development plan prioritises the key aspects for the school's development over the next nine terms and is particularly helpful in ensuring that all leaders, ATB members and trust representatives are clear about the intended improvement journey. Precise milestones are enabling ATB members to begin to hold school leaders to account for the progress made.

The ATB is in its infancy. However, its members are not afraid to challenge the school's leaders to ensure that improvements are realised. They already demonstrate an accurate understanding of the school's current position. Members have the appropriate experience and skills to be well placed to drive further improvement. The current leadership team is ensuring that the ATB is better informed about the work of the school.

The executive headteacher has been committed to establishing a team of leaders and teachers who are highly skilled, have the highest expectations of pupils and are ready for the challenge ahead. Underpinning this has been a more robust approach to holding staff to account for the quality and impact of their work. While an interim leadership team is in place, the task is not yet complete and is slowing the rate of progress the school is able to secure. It therefore remains the school's greatest challenge. Where the strongest leaders and teachers are already in place, however, other teachers in those year groups are benefiting from the level of support and development they receive by working as a year-group team. This in turn is resulting in more rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and consequently greater progress is evident in these classes. At present this is limited to Years 5 and 6.

An ambitious plan to tackle attendance has resulted in rapid improvements in attendance overall for pupils and for specific groups where attendance and persistent absence have historically been problematic.

An external review of pupil premium spending has taken place but as yet, it is difficult to see the impact in terms of academic outcomes for pupils. However, attendance for this group has now increased and is above the national average for this group and in line with that of other pupils in the school.

Leaders have devised an assessment system which is starting to give teachers and leaders more accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress. This is enabling teachers to take greater ownership and be more accountable for the progress their pupils make through 'chances' meetings and performance management. Teachers are becoming proactive about seeking development opportunities and evidencing the improvements to their teaching that contribute to improving pupils' learning.

The trust has arranged for monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment to be quality assured and externally validated by a range of sources, for example by the multi-academy trust, partner schools and external consultants. This has ensured that monitoring information is as reliable as possible, particularly with the recent transition in leadership positions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

While showing signs of improvement overall, the current quality of teaching lags behind the performance milestone set by the school. Progress has been hampered by staffing changes and absence. This inconsistency in teaching has diluted the impact of staff training and support that leaders have provided.

New assessment systems have enabled teachers to assess pupils' starting points and better plan to meet their needs. Teachers are now more aware of gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. They work in teams to plan sequences of learning to address this so that work is more accurately pitched. In Years 5 and 6 where this strategy is more established, it is beginning to affect the quality of teaching in those classes. However, in some classes, teachers do not always notice when pupils have not grasped their learning and this results in lost learning time and misconceptions not being addressed.

A focus on vocabulary development is evident in classrooms and teachers are giving pupils increased opportunities to read across the curriculum. This was noticeable during the inspection, especially in mathematics, although it sometimes becomes a barrier to learning if a pupil is unable to read or understand a word. This is compounded in the classes where pupils do not have the confidence or independence to ask for help when they are stuck.

Pupils' presentation of their work in workbooks is improving in most year groups and pupils usually take pride in their work. There are inconsistencies within classes on occasion, however, as some teachers do not yet have high enough expectations, particularly of the pupils who are furthest behind with their learning. There are examples of high standards of presentation in the displays in corridors and in some classrooms.

Leaders, who now have class teaching responsibilities, work in year-group teams. In these year groups, teaching is showing the most improvement with higher expectations evident and teaching strategies that are successful in beginning to accelerate pupils' progress. In contrast, teachers in other year groups do not have high enough expectations at times and can be overly positive, praising pupils' work without picking up basic errors and poor presentation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Effective leadership of attendance has resulted in rapid improvements. Robust tracking and analysis mean that no stone is left unturned. The processes used by the school, which are supported by pupil premium funding, are very thorough. Attendance is currently 95.1%, which is a huge improvement compared with 91.9% at the same time last year. Persistent absence has decreased to 11.7% from 25.6%. Both attendance and persistent absence are on track to reach the school's targets to be in line with or better than the national average by the end of the year.

The executive headteacher has high expectations of pupils and staff. Changes to uniform and insistence on pupils being well presented are examples of how this is bringing about better aspirations for pupils. Pupils now show pride in their appearance and are starting to appreciate and value the education they receive. Through enriched curriculum experiences such as the recent 'super learning day', older pupils were able to talk about their hopes for the future and had ambition about possible careers they were hoping to work towards.

Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and know what the expectation is for acceptable behaviour. The oldest pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning as the activities challenge them and appropriately meet their needs. However, there are still examples of low-level disruption and pupils confirm this. It is most evident when the work teachers set is not sufficiently challenging and pupils do not have to think deeply to succeed.

Except in the older classes, pupils do not yet have the learning behaviours with which to maximise their learning and progress. Pupils who are stuck with their work often do not know how to help themselves or how to seek support from others. This results in them waiting for someone to notice and valuable learning time is wasted.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders have implemented a range of actions and identified appropriate key priorities to improve outcomes. However, until the staffing is more secure and of higher quality throughout the school, it will be difficult to see the impact in terms of pupils' outcomes.

Attainment for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was well below the national average. Similarly, by the end of key stage 1, attainment was well below average. Progress was too variable to make up the lost ground in pupils' learning, particularly in key stage 2, where progress in reading and mathematics was significantly below the national average.

The new assessment system is allowing leaders to more accurately track the progress of groups, for example, of disadvantaged pupils. At 'chances' meetings, leaders and teachers work together to plan the support needed for pupils. This is still in the early stages. However, as yet, assessment information and work in pupils' books are not showing that progress is accelerating for most year groups, including for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, this is an urgent priority for leaders.

As a result of the swift action taken by the acting early years leader to increase the opportunities for more reading, writing and mathematics in the outdoor area, outcomes are already improving. For example, a greater proportion of boys have already met the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics than by the end of Reception last year.

The improvements made to the quality of teaching in Year 6 are resulting in better progress for this year group. A recent sample test paper shows that results are already higher this year in reading and mathematics than by the end of last year. However, leaders are aware that a legacy of underachievement means that pupils are not yet making the progress needed to reach their potential.

External support

The sponsor has developed its internal infrastructure and human resource capacity in order to more effectively provide and sustain the level of operational and strategic support the school needs to exit special measures in a timely fashion. Trustees are keen that improvements made are sustainable and while acting with greater urgency following the development of an interim leadership team, trustees acknowledge that continued support from the trust remains a priority.