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23 October 2017

Mrs Finola Gill  
Interim Headteacher  
St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School  
Polhearne Way  
Brixham  
Devon  
TQ5 0EE

Dear Mrs Gill

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26–27 September 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 February 2017.

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 trust's statement of action is not 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 chair of the governing body, the chief executive of Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Torbay. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017.**

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - securing leadership capacity in the school so that leaders are not overly reliant on external support
  - establishing clear systems for the performance management of staff so that teachers receive guidance and support to improve the quality of their teaching and to raise standards
  - implementing a consistent and accurate system for assessing and tracking pupils' learning
  - ensuring that governors understand the impact teaching has on pupils' progress and check more rigorously on the school's performance, holding leaders fully to account for the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
  - developing clear lines of communication with parents
  - making sure that provision in the early years meets the needs of the children.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly by ensuring that teachers:
  - raise expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve and improve rates of pupils' progress
  - accurately understand what pupils can and cannot do and use this knowledge to eradicate any gaps in learning
  - increase their subject knowledge, especially about writing, so that they can plan the next steps in pupils' learning effectively, particularly for the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
  - ensuring that rates of attendance improve for all groups of pupils
  - developing pupils' understanding of bullying and knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
  - the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is stimulating and supports children's explorations and development of their imagination
  - assessment is improved by using it effectively to ensure that planned learning and provision builds on what children know, can do and understand, particularly in writing for boys and the most able children.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 26 to 27 September 2017**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I conducted visits to observe pupils' learning in all classes and reviewed the pupils' work in books jointly with the interim headteacher and the trust's head of school improvement. I also carried out a learning walk focusing on the early years and key stage 1 with the interim headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). I scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, acting assistant headteacher and the SENCo. I spoke with pupils in classes and at lunchtime.

I held a discussion with two governors and spoke by telephone with the interim chief executive officer of Plymouth CAST ('the trust') and an officer of the local authority. Additionally, I met the trust's head of school improvement and one of the trust's school improvement officers.

Furthermore, I spoke with a number of parents and carers at the end of the school day and took into account 10 responses to Parent View.

### **Context**

Since the inspection in February 2017, a number of staff have left the school, including the headteacher. The interim headteacher, who took up post days before the previous inspection, remains in post on a full-time basis. Governors have appointed three new teachers and a SENCo. Some governors have also left. The number of pupils has fallen from 140 to 122.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The 'statement of action' which was submitted shortly after the previous inspection report was published was not fit for purpose. Trust leaders are yet to revise this document. They have not demonstrated the knowledge and understanding that is needed to improve the school urgently and this is hampering school improvement overall.

Trust leaders have failed to secure the leadership capacity which was identified at the previous inspection as a key area for development. As yet there is no confirmed plan to recruit permanent and secure leadership for the school. Consequently, leadership remains fragile.

In the short time she has been in post, the interim headteacher has made a clear assessment of the widespread weaknesses in the school. The revised school improvement plan identifies these weaknesses and includes measurable steps to bring about the improvements needed. However, the plan has yet to have the

impact intended because there is not enough capacity among current leaders, across the school, to secure the rapid improvement required. External support for the school has taken too long to finalise, with a package of support only recently being confirmed. As a result, progress against the recommendations identified at the previous inspection has been too slow.

Trust leaders and governors have not yet set performance targets for the interim headteacher. Nor has the interim headteacher yet agreed focused targets for teaching staff by which their effectiveness can be measured. As a result, governors do not have sufficient knowledge to challenge school leaders. Teachers do not yet have the specific direction, support and understanding of how they will be held to account, in order to rapidly improve outcomes for pupils.

The leaders' strategy to improve teaching is not having the impact it needs to. The interim headteacher has implemented a new assessment system to check pupils' learning and understanding against national curriculum expectations. However, she has not ensured that teachers have the right skills and knowledge to assess accurately what pupils know, understand and can do. Training and support for teachers has not been effective. This is hindering teachers' ability to plan work that meets pupils' needs and so pupils do not make the progress they need to.

Leaders have not ensured that teaching is tackling the gaps in pupils' basic skills and knowledge quickly enough. Leaders' checks on the accuracy of assessment lack precision. This means that the information leaders provide to the trust and governors about school performance continues to be over-generous. Consequently, the trust and governors have a false impression of pupils' progress, especially in writing. Governors still do not have a clear enough picture of the quality of teaching and the impact it is having on pupils' progress.

The previous inspection highlighted the need for a review of the school's use of the pupil premium. A review was carried out by an external consultant in June 2017. However, it is not apparent what steps have been taken to meet the recommendations made in this report. The outcomes for disadvantaged pupils remain too low. This is seen in the provisional progress measures for the end of key stage 2 where, in every measure, disadvantaged pupils achieved markedly less well than their classmates. School leaders have recently expanded the role of the SENCo to include raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The newly appointed SENCo is taking a systematic, analytical approach to better identify the particular needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, a promising start has been made in developing a clear picture of each pupil's needs and how best they can be supported. However, despite such recent and determined efforts, it is too early to see the impact of the school's work to improve achievement for this group of pupils, and they continue to make slow progress.

Leaders and governors do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. The trust and governors have not ensured that the designated leader for safeguarding and her deputies have the appropriate level of training and qualification that they need to carry out their roles effectively. It is not clear that governors know what they are looking for when they check the safeguarding arrangements. Consequently, failings in record-keeping, the completion of all the required pre-employment vetting checks and failure to implement safer recruitment procedures fully have gone unchecked. In contrast, the care that staff show for pupils is clear. They understand the risks pupils face and are alert to any signs that pupils might show if they are not safe. This is particularly the case for pupils who are absent from school or are regularly late.

Parents who spoke with the inspector and those who responded via Parent View are more positive about the school. A number indicated that communication is better and that they have greater confidence and faith in the school, particularly the interim headteacher. However, a few parents who responded through Parent View still feel the school could provide better information about their child's progress.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The lack of a precise strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning means that teaching is not improving quickly enough. As a result, pupils continue to be working significantly behind the standards expected for their age, particularly when looking at writing. This is seen most acutely in the performance of boys, the middle and high prior-attaining pupils and those who are disadvantaged.

Teachers have not yet had the support and training they need to improve their subject knowledge and skills, although a training plan is now in place. Consequently, teachers' assessment of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills remains over-generous, particularly in writing. Overall, staff lack the precise direction and training they need to plan learning that meets the needs of all pupils, particularly boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in key stage 1, teachers do not provide pupils with the structure that they need to set out their work accurately. As a result, pupils do not form their letters consistently or correctly and presentation is not clear. Pupils' phonic knowledge is particularly weak and outcomes remain low.

In early years, the progress that children make is too slow. Although there are opportunities for the children to develop their writing skills, few choose to do so. This is because teaching staff do not promote the importance of writing sufficiently. The early years indoor accommodation has been improved since the previous inspection. However, given the difficulties with the physical layout of the suite of rooms, teaching staff cannot balance supervision with the observation and assessment that is needed to plan effective future learning. The outdoor play area is not safe and is not suitable for use throughout the year.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils' behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. In class, and around the school, pupils show good attitudes towards each other. The small number of parents who responded to Parent View all report that their child feels safe, is happy and well looked after at this school.

In discussion with pupils, it is clear that they have a better understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying. They report that bullying is rare. A typical comment pupils made was that adults would 'not like it and stop it'. Pupils know where and who to go to if they were anxious and all could identify an adult who they were confident would help them.

Attendance has risen. Pupils' attendance for the last academic year was much closer to the levels typically seen nationally in the past. This was due to much higher levels of attendance in the summer term. The number of pupils who were regularly absent fell. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance rose markedly in the second half of the previous academic year to a very similar level to other pupils. This is as a result of the priority given to this group by school leaders.

The attendance for the first few weeks of this academic year is in line with those levels typically seen nationally. However, a number of pupils have already missed too many days of school. School leaders have appropriate plans in place to work with each family to ensure that the attendance of these pupils improves.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

The provisional outcomes of the assessments taken by Year 6 in 2017 show that pupils achieved poorly. In key stage 2, no pupils achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment information for key stage 1 shows pupils are reaching standards that are much lower than those typically seen nationally in writing. The number of pupils who reached the threshold level in the phonics screening check was also low. However, while low, this was significantly higher than at the time of the previous inspection.

The school's assessment information and unpublished outcomes for early years show a similar proportion of children achieving a good level of development to that typically seen nationally. However, there is insecurity in these assessments because these pupils, now in Year 1, do not show that they are able to apply their skills and knowledge of many of the early learning goals. This means that they do not have the understanding that is needed to confidently approach tasks in Year 1.

Most marked is the low attainment and slow progress of boys and disadvantaged pupils in writing. In key stage 2, too many pupils are working at least one academic year behind the standard expected for their age.

Staff have identified the gaps in pupils' understanding but they do not use this knowledge to plan learning that will allow pupils to catch up. Outcomes remain weak because teachers do not plan sufficiently to develop pupils' understanding. Consequently, pupils struggle to apply the knowledge they are acquiring.

### **External support**

Additional support was initially identified for the school to work with a national leader of education but this work was not maintained. The trust has now allocated additional time for one of its school improvement officers to work with the school. Currently, there is no evidence that this support has had the demonstrable impact that is needed.

Recently, the trust has secured support from a local education support and improvement service. This includes a wide range of support which is focused on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this support because its work with the school is in its infancy.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Urgently provide teaching staff with the knowledge, understanding and support they need to improve pupils' phonic knowledge and application in the early years and in key stage 1.