

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



9 November 2017

Dawn Breeze  
Executive headteacher  
St Pius X RC Primary School  
Gatehouse Avenue  
Withywood  
Bristol  
BS13 9AB

Dear Mrs Breeze

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of St Pius X RC Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 October 2017 with Jan Isaac, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in March 2016. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the city of Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2016.**

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, in order to increase pupils' progress and raise their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
  - making best use of assessment information to guide the planning of lessons so that the work set is at the right level, including making sure that the most able pupils are fully challenged
  - improving feedback to pupils on their written and mathematical work so that they know how to improve
  - improving pupils' confident recall of number facts and their understanding of mathematical vocabulary
  - supporting pupils to develop an understanding of, and ability to use in context, a rich and varied vocabulary.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance by:
  - ensuring that subject leaders, and the leader of the early years, develop the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to contribute fully to the process of school improvement
  - developing the curriculum so that pupils have more opportunities to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills to support their learning in other subjects
  - continuing to work with parents to increase pupils' attendance and punctuality at the start of the day
  - checking closely that the spending of the pupil premium funding helps those eligible for its support to achieve as well as they can.

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 might be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 October 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with you as the recently appointed interim executive headteacher. Meetings also took place with the head of school, the chair and other representatives of the governing body, as well as a representative from the local authority. In addition, meetings were held with middle leaders to evaluate their impact and the effectiveness of their work to build capacity. Inspectors examined the quality of work in pupils' workbooks and checked their performance against the school's current tracking and assessment information. Inspectors also heard pupils read and spoke with them at breaktime and during the range of inspection activities.

### **Context**

Since my previous visit in July 2017, there have been a few changes to staffing as well as to the governing body. The most significant change has been your arrival in September 2017 as interim executive headteacher. There have been two new teaching appointments since September but only one of these teachers is still working in the school. The governing body has one vacancy following a re-organisation. The governing body has not yet secured an academy sponsor.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Following your appointment at the start of the new academic year, you have already begun to build positively on the previous work of leaders. You have ensured that teachers and other leaders clearly identify what it is that pupils know, understand and can do. This is particularly useful for leaders when having conversations with teachers about the rates of progress pupils are making and identifying where some are still progressing too slowly.

You have quickly understood the challenges facing the school and taken effective action to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Your prompt and efficient monitoring has allowed you to take immediate action to improve teaching in particular year groups. You have used the findings to complete the teachers' performance management process, which links pupils' outcomes clearly to the support and challenge that individual teachers need. You have also led the re-drafting of the school's improvement plan and the implementation of new strategies to raise standards. For example, you have improved the way that the daily phonics strategy is taught across the school.

You have quickly established a productive working partnership with the head of school, middle leaders and governors. The assistant headteacher is also having a discernible impact, especially through checking pupils' progress and working with teachers to identify those pupils who need additional intervention or support.

You are encouraging and supporting middle leaders to take a lead in school improvement. They strongly endorse the direction and rigour you have brought to this. As a result of your focused leadership, they know their roles and responsibilities well and are motivated to succeed. Middle leaders, such as the English and mathematics subject leaders and the assessment leader, are routinely involved in checking and monitoring pupils' work. However, at this stage, they focus too much on teachers' actions and compliance rather than on the impact of teaching and provision on pupils' learning. For example, a typical comment noted in leaders' monitoring states, 'Worksheets to be trimmed and stuck in neatly.'

Middle leaders are working closely with a specialist leader in education. This is providing continued and necessary support, especially for the new English and science leaders. A successful emergency bid for funding through the Department for Education means this essential support is set to continue.

Since my previous visit, governors have been pro-active in evaluating their work. They have completed their own self-evaluation and have used this to draft a governors' action plan (linked to priorities in the school's development plan). This is helping to inform and guide their work. Governors have reallocated their roles to ensure that those with the appropriate skills are working on the most appropriate committees to increase their effectiveness. For example, the chair of the standards committee is a teacher who brings first-hand knowledge and expertise to the role.

Governors continue to ask questions and are keen to hold leaders to account. Their school visits and checks are useful in giving them much of the information they need to hold pertinent discussions with you and other leaders. However, they do not yet follow up visits and subsequent questions robustly enough to bring about more rapid improvement.

You are taking effective action to respond to previous inspection findings. For example, teachers are focusing on basic literacy and numeracy skills so that pupils can have a secure basis on which to build. However, some teaching still does not support pupils well enough in gaining age-appropriate spelling skills. This impedes their ability to use and apply a rich and varied vocabulary. Similarly, in mathematics, teachers do not always enable pupils to build quickly on their prior knowledge and often repeat low-level work. This restricts pupils' understanding and their ability to use and apply what they already know about numbers and related facts.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement**

- You have quickly understood the needs and priorities for improvement. Consequently, you are taking decisive action to continue to improve the school, particularly where there are weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment. For example, you have immediately targeted teaching that needs extra support and allocated the right professional training as a priority.

- The school's plans and actions ensure that appropriate professional training and development are in place for staff. However, as we discussed, the school development plan identifies too many priorities. This results in core messages about teaching and learning being lost or diluted. This slows improvement in some classes.
- Leaders and teachers track pupils' progress using grids, checking their progress at least every half-term. As a result, leaders have identified pupils who are falling behind and ensured support plans are in place to help them catch up. However, in some cases, reported progress on pupils' tracking grids is overly positive and not consistent with what the children actually know, understand and can do.
- School leaders ensure that there is a strong culture for safeguarding pupils. Leaders work effectively with parents, other external agencies and staff to keep pupils safe. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that they follow up or refer on any concerns quickly and efficiently. The school's processes and systems for checking and training staff are robust and fit for purpose. Pupils say that they feel safe, and are confident in the school staff to look after them.
- Middle leaders are now starting to have a more influential role in school improvement, especially through the work of the assistant headteacher. However, other core subject leaders are not yet fully adept and still need to hone their skills to be fully effective. For this reason, improvement is still reliant on a few individuals. However, you have rightly targeted this as a priority for building capacity and securing the necessary improvement.
- The leadership in the early years foundation stage is continuing to improve outcomes so that by the end of the Reception Year there is an increasing proportion of children reaching a 'good level of development'. Although, as we discussed, overall this still remains much lower than the national average.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement**

- The quality of teaching is not good enough across the school. This continues to impede the rates of progress for some pupils in key stages 1 and 2, especially in the attainment of key groups, including girls, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils. However, there are some areas of strength, most notably in upper key stage 2, where pupils are making rapid progress and starting to catch up quickly.
- The quality of work across the curriculum is not consistently good. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils are using their basic skills in reading, writing and numeracy well enough in the full range of subjects.
- Teachers do not always plan sequences of work to build well enough on what pupils have previously learned. For example, children spend too much time repeating low-level skills such as using the symbols (<>) in their work. Furthermore, some teachers and teaching assistants do too much for the children. An over-reliance on copying work limits the development of pupils'

ability, skills and confidence to 'have a go' for themselves.

- Although newly introduced strategies are starting to have some positive impact, these are still very recent and are not yet having a consistently powerful impact on pupils' outcomes. For example, the daily phonics strategy does not fully meet the needs of all pupils as daily sessions can be either too difficult or easy for some pupils. This slows the rates of pupils' progress.
- Despite improvements, attendance and punctuality are not yet good enough. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, as well as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is poor. The resulting high levels of absence still lead directly to gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, which hold them back.

### **External support**

The governing body works closely with the local authority who continue to provide the school with necessary external support and challenge. For example, in October 2017, the school's local authority adviser conducted a joint evaluation of the school's pupil premium strategy. This concluded that there 'has been some evidence of improvements in attainment and progress. Progress from starting points is positive but this in many cases does not appear to be an acceleration'. Governors are continuing to check the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils.

Along with other school leaders and governors, you meet with local authority representatives on a regular basis through 'core visits'. The next core visit is planned for November 2017. The local authority supports the governing body through reviewing progress and working with leaders to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The link adviser has also worked with the governing body in completing your appraisal.