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20 November 2017

Mrs Zoe Batten
The Clinton Church of England Primary School
Merton
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Dear Mrs Batten

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Clinton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 31 October to 1 November 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 March 2017.

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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.

- Leaders and governors should ensure that safeguarding is effective, including in the early years, by:
 - meeting all statutory duties of recruitment and the recording and reporting of concerns
 - developing a safeguarding culture throughout the school so that pupils feel confident to share their concerns
 - governors checking that leaders fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
- Urgently improve leadership and governance by:
 - rapidly securing a stable leadership structure and skilled teaching staff, including in the early years
 - ensuring that additional funding is well targeted to meet the range of different needs of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that outcomes for these pupils improve considerably and are carefully evaluated
 - ensuring that the curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and that it prepares pupils better for life in modern Britain.
- Urgently improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - establishing routines and procedures so that pupils can share their concerns
 - reducing low-level disruption in lessons.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - establishing a robust system for checking the quality of teachers' performance
 - implementing a structured programme of training to support teachers' subject knowledge
 - ensuring that teachers' assessment is accurate and it is used to plan activities that are matched to pupils' needs.
- Urgently improve pupils' outcomes and insist that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve, including in the early years
 - the most able pupils are given activities that engage and challenge them.

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 31 October 2017 to 1 November 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the leader of special educational needs. She talked to pupils, parents, the interim executive board (IEB) and had telephone discussions with representatives of the local authority and the diocese. The inspector also met with a national leader of education and other staff from the North Devon Teaching School Alliance who currently provide external support to the school.

Context

Senior leaders have changed since the inspection earlier this year. A new executive headteacher has been in place since May 2017. The previous governing body was dissolved and has been replaced by an IEB. The key stage 2 teacher left in May 2017. A deputy headteacher has been appointed. She teaches part-time in key stage 2. There is a temporary part-time teacher in key stage 2 who teaches this class for the rest of the week. As part of its management partnership with St Helen's School in Abbotsham, leaders have increased leadership capacity by utilising additional staff. As a result, a school business manager, specialist teaching staff and a premises manager and health and safety coordinator support the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since your arrival as executive headteacher, you have made a good start in addressing the extensive failings at this school. You have empowered staff, at all levels, to focus on overcoming the school's significant weaknesses. You and your deputy headteacher communicate a clear passion and stoic determination to improve all aspects of the school's work. Together, you have been effective in restoring order to the school on a day-to-day basis.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The school's action plan is fit for purpose. The school's plan prioritises the right aspects for rapid improvement. It includes appropriate success criteria and short-term and medium-term milestones to measure improvement over time. Leaders, including the IEB, monitor each action to ensure that it is bringing about the necessary changes.

You have prioritised making the school site safe and improving pupils' behaviour and safety. You have responded quickly to the local authority safeguarding audit, drawn up an action plan and sorted out the many aspects that were substandard. As a result, systems, staff vetting checks and record-keeping are now fit for purpose and meet current legislation. You have made the nursery safe by ensuring that there are appropriate staff to pupil ratios and invested in a new outdoor space so

that children have a safe space for learning.

Staff have been retrained and systems to record concerns about children at risk have been overhauled. As a result, staff have a good understanding of what to do should they be concerned if a child is at risk and they apply this well to their daily work. Improved induction procedures for new members of staff enable them to apply confidently the school's policies and guidance to keep pupils safe. School documentation confirms that concerns are followed up assiduously and leaders work closely with external agencies to minimise children's risk of harm. This first phase of improvement has been successful.

New leadership systems have been put into place to enable future improvements. For example, you have established new systems to manage the performance of staff. Annual targets that are set for teachers are firmly focused on improving pupils' outcomes.

Leaders' strengthened systems to improve the provision for pupils who have special educational needs are taking hold well. Leaders are working determinedly to ensure that pupils' learning needs are met. There is an increased focus on measuring the impact of interventions to support learning. Consequently, these pupils are beginning to make faster progress in reading. However, leaders know that there is more to do to ensure that pupils' learning is closely matched to their needs in writing and mathematics.

Alongside this work, you have skilfully deployed external support to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Additional training for staff has been put into place to support them to plan more effectively and strengthen their teaching. In recent weeks, there has been some improvement to the quality of teaching and learning on offer. Leaders now communicate much higher expectations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and require teachers to take full responsibility for developing the quality of their own teaching. However, this work is not yet resulting in the rapid and substantial improvement in pupils' achievement.

Leaders have started to take appropriate steps to increase their checks on teaching, learning and assessment. Precise feedback is now given to teachers. As a result, they have clear guidance so that they can apply this to improve their teaching. However, so far, leaders have not checked pupils' work in books with the rigour needed to secure rapid progress. As a result, pupils are not yet making the progress they are capable of.

The IEB has been in place for a few months. The delay in setting up this group and changes to the membership have slowed their impact. Since September, they have been working skilfully, at pace, to secure long-term improvement and the future sustainability for the school. They are working to appropriate timescales for academy transfer.

The IEB are beginning to challenge leaders, holding them to account for achieving the milestones and targets in the school's action plan. The IEB has been successful in strengthening its checks on safeguarding records and in ensuring that health and safety defects have been eradicated. However, the IEB accurately acknowledges that its work to hold leaders to account to secure better outcomes for pupils is very recent and so its impact is still to be determined.

The external review of pupil premium funding has been completed. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for tracking the impact of this funding. New systems to track individual pupils' progress, including reviewing pupils' work, are in their first phase of development. As a result, these systems are not yet having the impact they need to on raising pupils' achievement. The school fulfils its duty to provide accurate information on its website about the progress of this group of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Week by week, leaders are building momentum in their improvement work to ensure that teaching meets pupils' needs well. However, other improvement work to stabilise school organisation had to come first, so, the impact of leaders' strategy for improving teaching and learning is most evident over the last six weeks. This period is short and improvement has not yet been sustained for long enough to reverse the widespread underachievement.

Teachers have increased their expectations of how pupils must present their work. A daily focus on handwriting and insisting pupils apply the school's new presentation code to their writing is resulting in pupils being proud of their work. Presentation in mathematics workbooks is markedly improved since the previous inspection.

Teachers' assessment is now increasingly accurate in key stages 1 and 2. However, teachers are not using all the information they have to plan work that builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do. As a result, pupils' progress is not improving rapidly, and for some groups of pupils, their underachievement remains prevalent.

Teaching is too inconsistent across subjects and years. Sometimes, pupils sit through work that is too easy or too hard. This is not picked up quickly enough and so progress slows, particularly for the lower-attaining pupils and the most able pupils. Some pupils are not getting consistent and fair access to learning that meets their needs because pupils are not exposed to the expectations set in the curriculum for their age.

Teachers' subject knowledge has improved in key stage 1 as a result of the staff training they have received. The teaching of phonics is improving. However, the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. These pupils have to sit through work that is too easy before they tackle the more challenging work or apply their phonics and spelling to their writing.

The teaching of writing at key stage 2 requires further work. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Teaching does not take full account of all aspects of the writing curriculum. Pupils are not routinely expected to apply their understanding of grammar and punctuation to their independent writing. As a result, pupils do not write with the sophistication or stamina expected for their age.

Support to improve teaching, learning and assessment in the early years is in its infancy. Children benefit from a range of activities in Nursery and Reception and they are well cared for. However, assessment systems need to be strengthened further so that children's progress can be checked with rigour and rapid progress secured. Teachers can then plan learning to meet pupils' needs more precisely.

Leaders have been successful in raising teachers' expectations in mathematics. Leaders' whole-school strategy to improve pupils' understanding of place value and calculation strategies is taking hold well. At key stage 2, teaching is enabling pupils' gaps in learning to be filled and pupils who have previously underachieved are catching up towards the standards that are expected for their age.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

A clear focus by leaders has built a positive culture where pupils' personal development and well-being sits at the core. Weak practices and low expectations are no longer accepted as the norm.

Leaders have taken decisive action to tackle unacceptable behaviour and the low-level disruption in lessons that was evident at the previous inspection. This work is largely effective. On the whole, pupils respond well to these higher expectations. They say that 'behaviour is better now than it was before'. The new behaviour system is consistently applied. As a result, the regularity and severity of poor behaviour is reducing quickly.

The whole staff team has received additional training on behaviour management. As a result, any behavioural incidents are managed increasingly well. However, on occasion, a small minority of pupils demonstrate challenging and unsafe behaviour. Senior leaders manage this effectively. However, the IEB does not yet routinely monitor incidents of behaviour over time.

Pupils speak favourably of the changes put into place. They understand the new behaviour system and understand how good conduct and effort in class can contribute to positive reward. Most pupils show a keenness to learn. However, a few pupils do not yet show the determination and resilience to tackle work on their own. Adult support does not yet support pupils' independence and this limits pupils' opportunities to practise key skills.

Outcomes for pupils

Whole-school assessment systems to measure the pupils' progress have been established. This gives leaders an accurate view of pupils' achievement across the school. However, leaders are not yet using this system proficiently enough to track pupils' progress in workbooks. Gaps in pupils' learning are being filled so pupils' achievements are gradually improving. However, progress remains too slow for some groups of pupils, particularly the most able, because work on offer does not stretch and challenge them. Leaders have not been swift in taking action to address this aspect because their checks on pupils' books have not been robust enough. As a result, the legacy of underachievement caused by weak teaching over time remains. Teaching is not yet having the required impact on improving pupils' outcomes.

A whole-school focus on improving spelling across the school is helping pupils to adopt greater strategies to spell unknown words. However, pupils' punctuation and grammar remain poor in key stage 2. Teaching does not enable pupils to apply their writing skills in their English lessons well. As a result, too few pupils demonstrate sophisticated sentence structure and precision when they write and are working well below the standards that are expected for their age.

The whole-school strategy to improve mathematics is paying off. Pupils' ability to recall and apply their number facts and multiplication tables to word problems is improving quickly. Outcomes are improving steadily towards the standards that are expected nationally.

External support

The school receives considerable support from within the North Devon Teaching Schools Alliance and Woolacombe School. Increasingly, this work is tailored to meet the current needs of the school. As a result, it is having a positive impact on improving teachers' subject knowledge in phonics and mathematics. Occasionally, external support does not take full account of the wide ability and age range of pupils present in classes. Therefore, teachers do not receive guidance with respect to assessment strategies to ensure that learning builds on what pupils already know, can do and understand.

The local authority has provided timely support through monitoring visits and meetings to review the impact of leaders' actions. They are providing effective support for the IEB and executive headteacher. However, external support work has only just started in the early years foundation stage. It is too early to see the impact of this work.