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25 January 2018

Mrs R Bevan  
Headteacher  
St George's CofE Primary School and Nursery  
Birmingham Road  
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Dear Mrs Bevan

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St George's CofE Primary School and Nursery**

Following my visit to your school on 10–11 January 2018, 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 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 governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Worcester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, improve safeguarding so that it is fully effective by ensuring that:
  - designated senior leaders have a full and accurate understanding of all statutory safeguarding requirements and are suitably trained to fulfil their roles effectively
  - school policies and procedures are up to date and reflect current statutory safeguarding guidance
  - a robust system for recording concerns about pupils is developed and implemented, and relevant information is kept securely
  - all staff receive regular training that is appropriate to their roles in school and that an accurate record of staff training is established and maintained
  - the single central register is up to date and that the person responsible receives appropriate training in maintaining the record
  - safer recruitment procedures are followed stringently and that information held on staff is up to date
  - appropriate vetting checks, in line with Department for Education (DfE) requirements, are carried out on all governors
  - governors develop rigorous systems for ensuring that all aspects of safeguarding practice meet current requirements and guidance
  - checks on site safety and security are regularly and diligently carried out and recorded.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - monitoring and evaluation is used effectively across all areas of the school's work to ensure that leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses
  - improvement plans are coherent, focus sharply on the school's key priorities for improvement and have measurable and appropriate success criteria
  - systems for managing teachers' performance are rigorous and are used to hold teachers to account for the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes
  - the curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the needs of pupils across all subjects
  - governors are sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable to fulfil their responsibilities in ensuring that leaders are held to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, by:
  - ensuring that teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
  - ensuring that teachers set sufficiently challenging tasks for pupils, especially the most able, that demand them to think deeply
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in problem-solving using reasoning
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical and writing skills across different subjects
  - ensuring that teachers provide pupils with relevant learning activities across all subjects.
- Improve teaching so that it is at least good in the early years provision by ensuring that:
  - teachers and other adults plan and teach activities that are appropriate to the needs of the children and stimulate their interest in learning.
- Improve provision for pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
  - systems to improve attendance are sufficiently rigorous and that all parents understand the importance of ensuring that their children attend regularly and on time
  - pupils have a secure and accurate knowledge of the impact that different types of bullying can have on people.

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

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 10–11 January 2018**

### **Evidence**

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other leaders, the chair of the governing body and a parent governor. HMI also held a telephone discussion with representatives from Babcock Prime Education Service and the Diocese of Worcester.

### **Context**

Six teachers left the school in 2017 and the school has appointed replacements.

At the time of this monitoring inspection, leaders were waiting for a final decision regarding membership of the Rivers Church of England Academy Trust.

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

The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have received substantial support from Babcock Prime Education Service and the Rivers Church of England Academy Trust. Those supporting the school have conducted a number of reviews to check and report on aspects of the school's work and development. A range of initiatives have been introduced and implemented, though the significant turnover of staff has slowed the school's rate of improvement overall.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) from the Rivers Academy Trust works in the school two days a week. Following the last inspection, the school's DSLs attended training and received ongoing support to ensure that their understanding of statutory safeguarding requirements was up to date. The DSLs have updated and adapted the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, which now reflect statutory safeguarding guidance. The DSL from the academy trust has provided ongoing training for all staff so that they know the indications of neglect or abuse and how they must register any concern. In addition, she works closely with the governor responsible for safeguarding. Records of concerns, referrals and action taken are suitably detailed. The DSL ensures that staff follow all procedures diligently.

The single central record is now compliant with regulations, and appropriate checks are made and recorded on all staff, governors and volunteers. Leaders and some governors have received training in safer recruitment and they understand and follow these procedures. Access to the school's premises is controlled and all visitors are checked appropriately. School leaders regularly practise fire alarm procedures with pupils, and conduct health and safety checks of the premises.

The headteacher created a detailed action plan to address all areas for

improvement identified at the last inspection. Senior leaders drew up a monitoring, evaluation and training schedule in spring 2017. Leaders regularly monitor all aspects of the school's work, provide feedback and check that development points are met to the expected standard.

Subject leaders for English and the wider curriculum have established their own action plans and regularly monitor how well initiatives are implemented. The deputy headteacher worked closely with other schools, teachers and pupils to introduce approaches to planning across the full range of subjects from September last year. The leader for mathematics took up her role in November and has been quick to attend training and introduce new systems to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical methods, reasoning and problem solving. All subject leaders are keen to develop pupils' knowledge and skills while inspiring their enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning.

An external review of governance was conducted in May last year. The review identified and reported significant weaknesses regarding the governors' lack of understanding about their statutory responsibilities and strategic role. It made clear and substantial recommendations for the improvement of the governing body. Governors drew up an improvement plan but they have been too slow to access available training. As a result, governors remain overdependent on what they are told rather than being able to seek evidence independently and hold leaders to account. Governors continue to have too little impact on driving school improvement forward.

Consultations regarding the school's conversion to sponsored academy status are well underway. The school is set to join the Rivers Church of England Academy Trust when final details and decisions are confirmed.

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

Improvements to the quality of teaching have been compromised by the large number of staff leaving the school in the summer and autumn terms last year. Nevertheless, newly appointed staff lost no time in adopting leaders' expectations of them and contributing to further developments wherever appropriate. Leaders have introduced new approaches to the teaching of all subjects and while still at an early stage of development, staff are positive and optimistic about the changes.

Leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and learning, provide detailed feedback and signal appropriate training where necessary. Teachers have worked hard to assess pupils' progress with greater precision. As a result, teachers are increasingly able to plan and pitch lessons to meet pupils' needs more accurately.

Babcock Prime Education Service conducted a review of teaching and learning, and identified some weaknesses in staff's knowledge of individual subjects. Teachers

had been unable consistently to plan an accurate sequence of learning over time. Teachers are now more aware of what they should teach, particularly so that additional pupils achieve the higher standards appropriate for their age. Teachers involve teaching assistants in lesson planning. As a result, teaching assistants are very well prepared for their role in lessons. They are suitably knowledgeable, flexible and able to take the initiative where necessary.

In lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and check pupils' understanding with probing questions. As a consequence, pupils know what is expected of them. Year 6 pupils explained that the level of challenge was 'just right'. They explained that initial tasks were easier as an introduction but then got harder. Pupils agreed they enjoyed the extra challenge, as one boy explained, 'I'm all right with that.' Pupils listen carefully, consider approaches to their work and persevere when thinking becomes challenging. They have grown in confidence so that they are not afraid of making mistakes and know they can learn from them.

Leaders are keen to review and consider how well individual subjects are taught. They are working hard to ensure that all lessons have a clear, relevant and shared learning intention so that pupils understand the purpose of any activity and know what is expected of them. Teachers print the appropriate success criteria for each lesson. However, pupils do not yet use the information to check their work or to evaluate for themselves how well they have completed the tasks.

Teaching in the early years is still at an early stage of development. Following support from Babcock Prime Education Service, staff have improved the learning areas both indoors and outside. They continue to welcome advice and they are keen to bring about further improvements. Adults effectively secure pupils' learning when well-planned activities consolidate pupils' understanding or enable them to apply or practise new skills. However, adults do not consistently pick up errors quickly enough and miss some opportunities for assessment.

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

Attendance remains below the national average. However, attendance figures in the autumn term 2017 showed a marginal improvement compared with the same period in 2016. In addition, the rate of persistent absence reduced. Leaders are aware of patterns of absence and poor punctuality. Incidents are carefully recorded, followed up and analysed to inform further action. Staff make phone calls to parents and carers and arrange meetings to discuss how prolonged absence has a harmful impact on the pupils' education. An education welfare officer visits families where necessary and leaders are beginning to consider all legal options where attendance does not improve. Pupils appreciate the rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.

Leaders raised awareness of bullying through a programme of training and discussions. Pupils know the different types of bullying and what to do if they see or

hear incidents. In discussions, Year 6 pupils confirmed that a lot of work had been done in school to make everyone aware of inappropriate language and behaviours and what to do if they were worried. Behaviour logs and discussions with pupils provide evidence of very few recent incidents.

Pupils are given a range of responsibilities, including membership of the school council, the eco committee, the e-safety team and playground leaders. Pupils have a range of opportunities to contribute to decisions, take responsibility and help others. They have a secure knowledge of how to keep safe in and out of school. They rightly described pupils at St George's as 'polite, calm and hardworking'.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The proportion of children leaving the Reception Year with a good level of development was average from 2015 to 2017. In 2016, boys did not achieve as well as other boys nationally in almost all areas of learning. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been in line with the national average for the last three years.

Attainment at the end of key stage 1 last year was in line with national figures for reading, writing and mathematics. However, a below average proportion achieved the standards at greater depth.

By the end of key stage 2, pupils made broadly average rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the middle prior attainers progressed less well than their peers. An average proportion of Year 6 pupils attained the expected standard in all subjects, and disadvantaged pupils performed better than other pupils nationally in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in any subject was below the national average but was a slight improvement on the standards achieved in 2016.

### **External support**

Babcock Prime Education Service and the Rivers Church of England Academy Trust have provided significant training and support for school leaders and staff. They have conducted reviews of the school's practice to identify where further improvements should be made. The combined knowledge, experience and expertise of such support has helped to bring about the necessary developments. School leaders continue to benefit from ongoing support.

- As a matter of urgency, governors must seek the necessary training to ensure that they have a secure understanding of their statutory duties and strategic role.