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3 May 2018

Miss Cathy Lowry
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Miss Lowry

Special measures monitoring inspection of Priory Roman Catholic Primary School, Torquay

Following my visit to your school on 17–18 April 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim academy board (IAB), the chief executive officer of the multi-academy 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

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve urgently the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - leaders monitoring teachers' assessment frequently and ensuring that it is accurate
 - widening the scope of evidence on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making by checking assessments against the work in pupils' work books
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge so that teaching for the new curriculum in writing and mathematics is effective and teachers accurately assess pupils' progress against expected standards
 - developing the leadership skills of middle leaders so that there is sufficient capacity in the leadership team for the school to make the rapid improvements it needs to make
 - sharpening the improvement plan with frequent milestones to check the impact of strategic decisions and actions against improvements in pupils' progress and attainment
 - ensuring that initiatives to improve the curriculum and raise standards are fully understood and have a rapid impact on outcomes for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that leaders give governors accurate information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in a clear and consistent format so that impact can be more easily and rapidly assessed
 - governors developing a plan for monitoring the school's work against its strategic priorities to inform decision making, particularly about the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils
 - regularly reviewing all risk assessments, including those for the after-school childcare.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better, by teachers:
 - having consistent and high expectations of pupils' achievement and presentation of their work, so that pupils have more pride in their work and their successes
 - consistently applying the behaviour policy in all lessons so that any inappropriate behaviour is eradicated
 - making decisions about what pupils know and can do by using evidence from pupils' work matched against the national curriculum expectations as well as the information from tests

- planning lessons that are based on assessment over time and on the evaluation of pupils' understanding
 - engaging pupils' interest and enthusiasm by checking to see whether pupils are ready to move on and intervening if they do not understand the work
 - ensuring that the targets pupils are given are based on their next steps in learning, are understood by the pupils and are checked and changed as necessary.
- Accelerating the progress that pupils make in English and mathematics, particularly the progress of those pupils who are disadvantaged, most able or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
- rapidly closing gaps in pupils' arithmetical knowledge and developing pupils' ability to reason mathematically and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems
 - developing the accuracy of pupils' writing by overcoming weaknesses in spelling and punctuation and handwriting
 - ensuring that all teaching of writing, including the new writing and phonics programme, is pitched at moving pupils rapidly to the expected standard of writing for their age
 - providing consistent challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics and writing which will enable them to reach the high standards of which they are capable
 - ensuring that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are understood and planned for by teachers in all lessons so these pupils can apply and build on the skills they learn in supported programmes
 - checking frequently that the use of additional funding is enabling disadvantaged pupils to make accelerated progress and reach much higher standards.
- Improve the quality of leadership in the early years by:
- leaders checking more frequently that the assessments made by all staff in the setting are accurate so that children's needs are more clearly understood and quickly planned for.

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.

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 third monitoring inspection on 17 April 2018 to 18 April 2018

Evidence

The lead inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, parents and representatives of the IAB. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority and held meetings with the trust's education standards manager, subject leaders and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). There were joint analyses of pupils' work and lesson observations completed with senior leaders. The lead inspector also gathered the views of pupils and heard some read.

Context

Since the previous visit, there has been a further decline in the number of pupils on the school's roll. Together with the resignation of a teacher, this has led to a change in the organisation of classes. There are now mixed Year 3/4 and Year 4/5 classes. There is a further change in the Reception Year due to maternity cover for the class teacher. In terms of the school's leadership, the assistant headteacher post has been vacated and is being covered by a senior leader. There is also a new SENCo appointed on a part-time basis to add capacity. Following a previous recommendation, the trust has commissioned an external review of the school's pupil premium strategy.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous inspection with support of the trust, leaders have taken the right actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All leaders, including the new acting assistant headteacher and SENCo, have introduced systems that track pupils' progress closely and ensure that pupils who need it receive prompt intervention and support. Leaders and teachers are aware of the individual needs of pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In addition, the strategy for disadvantaged pupils is clear and being implemented effectively to raise achievement. The core team of the headteacher, acting assistant headteacher, mathematics subject leader and SENCo work well together. Their cohesive approach, including appropriately targeted continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers, is effectively addressing weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.

The IAB have met three times and their work is gathering momentum to improve the school. The demands of the IAB are ensuring that school leaders are being challenged and supported to tackle the right priorities with renewed rigour and urgency. This is bringing about the desired impact. For example, records and evidence show how expectations of the IAB have improved leaders' use and understanding of school assessment information. This is now more robust and

detailed, drawing on teacher assessments which are mostly reliable. Systems to moderate and check pupils' standards are also helpful in establishing accurate benchmarks for staff. Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching is accurately targeting areas for improvement for staff. However, 'next steps' are not precise enough, which slows the rate of development for some teachers.

The simplification of the school improvement plan is also enabling leaders to have a clear line of sight for improvement. As a result, leaders match key improvement strategies, including CPD, to tackle identified weaknesses for individual teachers as well as collectively for staff. Leaders are involved in checking and monitoring the impact of their own work, including through visits by members of the IAB which add rigour and increasing accountability. However, leaders agree that processes continue to need improvement. In particular, individualised support plans for vulnerable pupils, for example those who have SEN and/or disabilities or those with English as an additional language (EAL) are still not sufficiently precise. This slows pupils' progress and is a barrier to some reaching the academic standards and levels of attainment of which they are capable.

Parents and carers are starting to show an increasing confidence in the school's leadership. During the inspection, individuals were keen to approach the lead inspector and recount positive experiences and endorsement of the school. For example, parental comments about staff included, 'I can't fault them' and that they are 'brilliant and supportive'. In the responses to Parent View, nearly two thirds of parents now consider the school to be well led and managed. They would recommend the school to others. However, there is a significant minority who continue to express concerns. These are mostly linked to their understanding and views of pupils' behaviour.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has started to improve well since the previous monitoring inspection. As a result, achievement is now rising and progress is starting to accelerate in the school. Teachers are responding well to CPD and raised expectations of leaders. Consequently, any remaining inadequacies are being addressed to significantly reduce episodes of inadequate teaching. This is being replaced by teaching which is meeting pupils' needs and matching work appropriately to their different abilities. In addition, strong teaching in Years 2 and 6 is accelerating pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of each key stage. Where teaching is not good enough, leaders are implementing the necessary support and challenge for improvement.

Teachers' improving understanding of pupils' different needs and abilities and better use of assessment are enabling them to match work more consistently to pupils' needs. Teachers are now planning work that builds sequentially and appropriately on what pupils know, understand and can do. Teachers are using information to set up valuable pre-teaching work and interventions which are, in most cases,

supporting pupils appropriately. However, the quality of teaching in some interventions and phonics groups remains too variable. In the worst cases, weak subject knowledge still leads to some misconceptions or misunderstanding on behalf of pupils.

Despite the clear improvements in teaching, some fundamental areas still need to be addressed. Teachers are not consistently demanding the highest standards and still sometimes accept work which is poorly presented. This reduces the quality of work produced, including for the most able pupils who are capable of more. In addition, the quality of pupils' writing across subjects and genres, as well as limitations in pupils' understanding and application of number skills, still holds too many back. This is still preventing significant proportions of pupils from reaching age-related expectations in writing and mathematics.

The teaching of phonics continues to be a strength. This is well led and managed to ensure that pupils are gaining essential skills in their phonics development. However, there are isolated examples where subject knowledge of staff is not consistently meeting the needs of all pupils within a group.

Observations showed that children are appropriately supported through the teaching and provision in the early years. In particular, children read well to the lead inspector which showed strong 'catch up' in their knowledge and use of phonics. Furthermore, children were showing curiosity and working well together in different learning situations. For example, two children were making interesting observations about objects that float or sink. Similarly, a child making an interesting structure in the sandpit explained that this was a volcano and that they 'erupt'. Adults interact purposefully with the children to engage and interest them. However, there were occasions when adults did not take full advantage to challenge a grammatical misconception or to extend children to include appropriate punctuation at the end of a sentence. In response to the previous section 5 findings, leaders are using assessments to inform their knowledge of the children and to match provision accordingly to their needs. Following the very recent changes, the new early years leader is ensuring that the Reception follows the same processes and systems as the rest of the school in relation to checking and tracking the children's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Following the concerns raised at the school's last full inspection and subsequent breaches in safeguarding relating to after-school clubs, leaders have continued to monitor the provision and make checks in line with the current risk assessment. For example, 'spot checks' are completed to ensure that head counts are taken every 45 minutes. There have been no further concerns relating to after-school clubs and supervision.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures and protocols are effective. For

example, the single central record is checked by the IAB and pre-employment vetting is firmly in place. Staff have a strong awareness of the need to keep pupils safe. They are well trained to know when and how to report any concerns that they may have. Referrals are dealt with speedily by the designated safeguarding leaders. They are confident in their roles and evidence shows they have acted decisively in working with other agencies to help keep pupils safe. This includes, where appropriate, direct referrals and the involvement of social services and the police.

The attendance of pupils remains marginally below the national average. It is particularly low for some groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and for some who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, school leaders and a designated team of staff, including an attendance officer, monitor this closely. Staff have regular discussions with parents and carers of pupils who have persistently high or concerning absence. Consequently, leaders' actions are having a positive impact on individual cases which can be linked to improving outcomes for some pupils.

There have been some exclusions since the previous monitoring inspection. These have been fully reported and legally administered, including the involvement of parents and carers, for example in reintegration meetings.

Pupils, parents and a few staff continue to report some low-level disruption in lessons. This causes disruption to pupils' progress and enjoyment in their learning. Leaders and teachers have continued to implement strategies to improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning. However, where teaching is weakest, it fails to hold pupils' interest or set clear expectations, which continues to exacerbate issues with behaviour in some lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Rates of progress are improving in the majority of classes across the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 are showing strong progress in their reading, writing and mathematics within the academic year as well as from the end of key stage 1. Work in pupils' books confirms school leaders' views that progress is improving, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, there are still some year groups and subjects where attainment remains low, especially in writing and mathematics. Pupils' writing and number skills are not yet consistently at age-related or expected standards. Leaders and teachers are now fully aware of this and where these gaps are. As a result, they are focusing their efforts on particular groups and individuals, especially through targeted plans and interventions. This is having a positive impact but more needs to be done to ensure that the current trajectory for improvement is sustained in all subjects and across the curriculum.

There is an increasing proportion of pupils working at the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is aided by teachers ensuring that pupils have greater involvement in evaluating their learning. In the best examples, this is reflected in books where pupils are analytical and self-critical and make informed

judgements about their own learning. The most able pupils, for example in Years 2 and 6, are given opportunities to apply their learning in different contexts to stretch them or consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, this approach is not yet as consistently strong or established widely across the school in other year groups and classes.

Furthermore, there are some groups where progress is too variable. These include pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those with EAL in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress for some of these pupils is not strong enough in particular year groups. Leaders do not show an increased urgency for securing 'accelerated' progress that is required to reverse the 'lag' that has emerged historically for these key groups and individuals.

Strengths in phonics are continuing to improve the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Assessment information shows that this is likely to be above the national average and shows consolidated 'catch up' for pupils in Year 1.

In the Reception Year, attainment remains low. However, from their starting points, case studies and sampling of children's work show that the children are being well supported to start catching up from very low starting points. For example, on entry to the school, under 2% of children were working broadly at typical stages of development, including for reading, writing and mathematics. This is currently improving to around 53%. The early years foundation stage is the subject of further local authority monitoring in the summer term.

External support

School leaders are brokering support through the multi-academy trust to improve teaching and learning. This has come in the form of work with teaching schools, including ongoing support through a targeted writing project and funding through the Department for Education (DfE) for Years 5 and 6 disadvantaged pupils. School leaders are continuing to draw on the support of different specialist leaders in education which are being selected to address areas on the school's improvement plan. External support through commissioning a pupil premium review and writing moderation/training has been effective in identifying areas for improvement with current leaders. School leaders are using external support selectively to tackle weaknesses but are also demonstrating increasing skills and expertise to find internal solutions.