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Mrs Finola Gill
Headteacher
St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Gill

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 to 26 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2017. 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.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school should not appoint any further newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the interim chief executive officer of Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust (Plymouth CAST), 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 the development of their imagination
 - assessment is improved by using it effectively to ensure that planned learning and provision build on what children know, can do and understand, particularly in writing for boys and the most able children.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 to 26 April 2018

Evidence

The monitoring inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, parents and carers, members of the local advisory board and the director of education and standards for Plymouth CAST ('the trust'). He held telephone discussions with the interim chief executive officer and the chair of the interim advisory board.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, you have been appointed as the substantive headteacher and two new teachers have been appointed. The directors of the trust disbanded the governing body and have appointed an interim advisory board. The number of pupils has stabilised.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the monitoring inspection in September 2017, trust leaders have secured the leadership capacity that was identified as being deficient at the inspection in February 2017. They have achieved this through appointing the interim headteacher to the substantive headteacher post and the appointment of the special educational needs coordinator as assistant headteacher. Greater capacity within the trust is providing the school with the support needed to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The governing body was disbanded in October 2017. In its place, the trust board appointed an interim advisory board comprising four members, two trust officers and the headteacher. The appointed members bring a wealth of experience in primary education. They have quickly gathered a comprehensive and broadly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Interim advisory board members hold the headteacher and other leaders robustly to account for the progress that pupils make. They show tenacity in their monitoring of the school improvement plan and are forward thinking. They rightly recognise that the temporary additional leadership capacity in the school is having a positive impact. However, they are also acutely aware of the challenge of achieving this within the available budget.

Trust officers have set clearly focused targets for each senior leader. In turn, senior leaders have translated the targets into precise, pertinent objectives for each member of teaching staff. These objectives, which leaders have agreed with staff members, are closely aligned with the school's improvement priorities. Leaders have identified staff's training and development needs and have made arrangements to ensure that staff have the support they need to be successful. Interim reviews by

leaders show that good progress is being made.

Shortly before the monitoring inspection in September 2017, leaders had introduced a common assessment framework across the school. At that time, the validity of assessments could not be assured. As a result of leaders clarifying their expectations and providing training, teaching staff are increasingly confident when making their assessments. They are beginning to demonstrate a more accurate understanding of the standards that children should achieve within each year group.

Leaders have now implemented recommendations made in the review of the school's use of the pupil premium carried out in June 2017. Clear strategies are in place to ensure that the additional funding is used wisely. The assistant headteacher monitors the impact the funding is having carefully.

Parents continue to have confidence and faith in the school and particularly in the headteacher. Some show a better understanding of what their child should be achieving, given his or her age. Therefore, they have a better appreciation of how much catching up their children have to do.

The school's weekly newsletter contains useful information for parents and carers. Leaders have suggested to parents ways they can help their children to learn, but with little success. There is more to do to ensure that parents are able to complement the school's work to support their child's learning.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders now have a much clearer strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in writing. As a result of leaders' work, teachers have a clearer understanding of what they should expect children in each year group to achieve, given their age. Teachers are increasingly planning learning that is more closely tied to these expectations. However, some teachers lack the depth of subject knowledge needed to be able to accelerate the progress that pupils make across the curriculum.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are much more accurate than at the previous monitoring inspection. Staff training and support from leaders are helping teachers to plan more effectively to meet pupils' needs. This is particularly so for boys and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, teaching is stronger now and academic outcomes, although still low, are improving.

Many pupils, especially boys, are benefiting from additional teaching to help them overcome the specific barriers they face. Often these are led by teaching assistants. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to support these colleagues in order to ensure that pupils make rapid progress.

In early years, the outdoor play area has been refurbished. A covered outdoor space is accessible to children when the weather is inclement. It is now a safe and inviting area for children to learn. Similarly, the indoor accommodation has been improved. Adults now supervise children effectively. They undertake the observations and assessments needed to plan children's learning effectively. They provide a wide range of activities for both indoor and outdoor areas to develop children's phonics and for them to practise their writing skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher has ensured that all the necessary checks are completed for each member of staff. Furthermore, procedures have been tightened to ensure that procedures comply with the current statutory guidance.

Leaders' strategy to improve pupils' attendance is having a positive impact. The engagement of a specialist family support service is effective in providing families with the challenge and support that they need. As a result, attendance continues to improve. Rates of attendance for this academic year are in line with the levels typically seen nationally. The number of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 who are persistently absent has fallen sharply and is now well below that seen nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has risen markedly and is now similar to that of other pupils. Very few disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent.

Children in Reception attend less regularly and are more likely to be persistently absent than others across the school. Leaders have not done enough to ensure that parents understand the importance of regular attendance to improve their child's achievement.

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve. In class and around the school, pupils show better attitudes towards each other. Pupils comment on how much better behaviour is. Older pupils comment on how they have learned about behaviour and how leaders have made sure that the school is a harmonious place. They clearly articulate what bullying is and say that it is now very rare. School records confirm this.

Pupils remark on how they appreciate the clear expectations and 'straight talking' that some adults show. They value the range of activities available at lunchtimes and the leadership roles available. These include acting as buddies in 'The ARC', becoming outdoor play leaders, and looking after the school's hens.

Outcomes for pupils

Assessment information demonstrates that pupils are now making better progress. However, across key stages 1 and 2, pupils are starting from a very low base. This is especially the case in writing. Although pupils have fewer gaps in their knowledge, many do not have a secure understanding of concepts. As a result, too many pupils are still not reaching the standards expected for their age. In some year groups, this is true for as many as half of the pupils. The progress that pupils make is not yet rapid enough to enable them to catch up quickly and to compensate for the legacy of previously poor teaching.

For many pupils, especially boys, additional teaching and extra support from teachers and teaching assistants are helping them overcome the specific barriers they face. This is helping some, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to have knowledge of the topics they study.

Teachers' strategies in class and additional small-group tuition, as well as therapy sessions, are helping disadvantaged pupils to make progress at a similar rate to other pupils.

The most able pupils are still working below the level of their peers nationally. They do not have the breadth of knowledge to demonstrate that they fully understand the concepts they are learning to be able to attempt confidently the more challenging work they should.

External support

The more cohesive external support that is now in place is providing the training and development that teaching staff need to improve their skills. This has been effectively supplemented by two projects led by local teaching schools. These are helping to improve the teaching of phonics, and pupils' mathematical understanding in key stage 2.