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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jackie Chalk
Headteacher
St George's Church of England Primary School
Pound Lane
Semington
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 6LP

Dear Mrs Chalk

Special measures monitoring inspection of St George's Church of England Primary School, Semington

Following my visit to your school on 2 and 3 May 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 April 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 school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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 governing board and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services

for Wiltshire. 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 April 2017

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance by:
 - securing leadership capacity in the school so that leaders are not overly reliant on external support
 - implementing a consistent and accurate system for assessing and tracking pupils' learning
 - ensuring that checks on teaching are thorough and provide precise and timely guidance on what teachers need to do to improve
 - ensuring that governors know the impact teaching has on pupils' progress and more rigorously check on the school's performance, holding leaders fully to account for the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - implementing recent plans to ensure that there is adequate curriculum provision
 - ensuring that provision in the early years meets the needs of the children
 - improving the level of communication with parents.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve to improve rates of pupils' progress
 - accurately assess what pupils can and cannot do and use this knowledge to eradicate any gaps in learning across the curriculum
 - increase their subject knowledge, especially about mathematics, so that they can plan the next steps in pupils' learning effectively
 - provide pupils with the support and guidance they need to make progress, in particular for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - assessment is used effectively to ensure that learning and provision builds on what children know, can do and understand, so that children make rapid progress
 - the learning activities both indoors and outdoors are stimulating and promote children's learning and development.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 2 to 3 May 2018

Evidence

The inspector worked closely with senior leaders, particularly the headteacher, throughout the inspection. Inspection activities included: speaking with pupils and parents to gather their views; conducting joint learning walks to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning; sampling pupils' learning in phonics and undertaking observations in the early years. The inspector scrutinised a range of pupils' work in writing and mathematics. He also evaluated different plans, including the school improvement plan and subject leaders' plans. The accuracy of current assessment information was checked against evidence in pupils' work. The inspector met with other leaders including the senior leader, special educational needs coordinator, representatives of the interim executive board (IEB) and the chief executive officer of the White Horse Federation (WHF). Safeguarding procedures and related documentation were also scrutinised.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in December 2017 there have been few significant changes. The WHF is continuing to provide interim strategic leadership. St George's is still being led by the headteacher of Seend Church of England Primary. The trust is advancing its plans to assume full control of the school in July 2018. Some final details to achieve this are yet to be resolved, particularly relating to diocesan representation on the board.

Staffing has remained stable. The early years leader started on a part-time basis in January 2018. School leaders are currently making plans to change the staffing structure with effect from September 2018. These include creating both an executive headteacher and head of school post. As a consequence, school leaders are seeking to appoint a new teacher for the Year 5/6 class. There will also be a new teacher appointed in the Year 3/4 class. Governors and trustees are taking the appropriate action to recruit staff.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and senior teacher are continuing to take the right actions to improve the school. Their monitoring and evaluation is accurate. As a result, leaders are providing effective staff professional development and training, as well as tailoring provision to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Leaders' vision and appetite for improvement are relentless. The headteacher and senior teacher continue to show the tenacity and ambition to tackle weaknesses and secure the necessary improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

Since the previous monitoring visit, the local governing board (through the IEB) has also started to come into effect. Governors are holding school leaders to account,

for example through well targeted and planned visits. Governors' work is focused on particular priority actions. These tackle weaknesses arising from the previous monitoring visit and are fully in line with addressing the priorities from the previous full section 5 inspection. For example, governors have recently requested assessment information to analyse the performance of boys compared to girls. This is to improve their knowledge of different pupil groups and how they are progressing in order to increase accountability and raise achievement.

Pupils and parents continue to be proud of the school. Most parents say they feel listened to. Parents appreciate the efforts of leaders and staff. They cite improved communication as being a key lever for change. In fact, 97% of parents say the school is now well led and managed. Parents articulate an improvement in the culture for learning. This is supporting and motivating pupils and providing a strong platform for learning. For example, the recent drive to improve pupils' love for, and interest in, reading is effective. Leaders' actions are continuing to ensure that pupils are keen and willing to learn.

Leaders, including governors, have improved their use of the pupil premium funding. Their strategies and actions are checked to ensure that these are having the desired impact to raise achievement and improve attendance. Despite improvements, the pupil premium action plan does not have precise enough milestones or measures to check ongoing progress. Consequently, the rate of improvement is still not as rapid as it could be for particular disadvantaged groups, cohorts or individuals in reading, writing and mathematics.

There remain two key strategic shortcomings which are limiting pupils' progress. First, leaders' approach to the teaching of phonics is weak, especially because teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan precise next steps for pupils. This results in some vulnerable pupils making slow progress, including those who need to catch up quickly or have started to fall behind. Second, leaders' strategies to raise achievement for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to have weaknesses. In particular, assessment and tracking of pupils are not precise or fine enough to support pupils to make consistently strong progress, for example in mathematics. Therefore, the phonics and special educational needs strategies remain critical areas to tackle and remedy before the next full section 5 inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is continuing to improve. In particular, teachers' raised expectations are increasing the proportions of pupils now working close to or at the standards expected of them. Leaders' evaluations of teaching are accurate. This enables them to intervene and provide the right support and challenge to tackle weaknesses in teaching. Strengths in some year groups, particularly in the Year 5/6 class, provide an effective model for disseminating good practice and providing high-quality support for others where this is still needed.

In English, pupils are enjoying reading and writing for a variety of reasons. Pupils' written work shows an increasing confidence and knowledge to compose a range of writing in different styles and genres. In most classes, pupils' writing shows strong progress. However, some pupils' work shows a slight stalling or 'dip' following their arrival and subsequent journey in early key stage 2. The legacy of pupils' weak knowledge and poor skills to write convincingly is being overturned, although there are still persistent deficits which leaders are addressing. Pupils still show some weaknesses in editing sentences for effect, using incorrect spelling and punctuation. In addition, pupils are not yet consistently able to use complex themes or devices in their writing, such as shifts in formality. Leaders have recognised this and are ensuring that teachers plan activities to enable pupils to explore these more challenging ideas at length.

The teaching of mathematics is improving well. Previous misconceptions seen in mathematics lessons have been reduced or eliminated. Teachers' use of the school's preferred scheme is providing a solid backbone for teachers to plan pupils' next steps. As a result, pupils are gaining the confidence and knowledge to improve their basic computation and arithmetic skills. This is enabling more pupils to work at an age-related standard. However, in solving problems, especially those which require more complex or multi-step operations, pupils are not sufficiently adept at using and applying derived or known facts to help them. This limits the fluency and accuracy of some pupils, especially those most able to reach the highest standards.

Teaching and provision in the early years foundation stage has improved markedly from the previous visit. The new Reception Year leader is keen to take advice and is benefiting from external advice and guidance. As a result, the outdoor space is starting to improve the children's knowledge and development well. For example, children were seen working independently together to write a series of number sentences on a white board. This was deepening their social, linguistic and mathematical knowledge. In addition, activities to build children's personal and social development are supporting them well. Some boys were observed independently self-organising and managing their own time. They were counting and agreeing how many, and who, are allowed to play in specific areas at any given time. These activities are enabling the children to gain essential knowledge, understanding and skills to be ready for Year 1. However, there is more work to do to ensure that early literacy development is woven effectively through the range of activities. Furthermore, learning areas and activities are still too generic in their design or construction. They do not yet take enough account of the different ages and stages of development for different children, including the most able. As a result, some children are not making the rapid progress of which they are capable.

The teaching of phonics is not good enough. There are still weaknesses in teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge. This is a barrier to some pupils making the progress they need in 'cracking the phonics code' and being able to start reading fluently. As a result, some pupils, especially targeted boys, are still progressing too slowly. Teachers' use of assessment information to diagnose

barriers for pupils and plan their next steps precisely is poor. This does not support strong enough progress for pupils, especially those who need it most. It leads, for example, to some pupils having phonics books which are not well matched to their knowledge and ability in phonics.

Teaching to meet the needs of those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is variable. Leaders and teachers check pupils' individual support plans. All pupils have targets in place to support them. These reflect emotional, behavioural and/or academic targets, as required. However, next steps are not sufficiently refined to be consistently well matched to pupils' ongoing developmental or learning needs. Furthermore, planned periods between reviews are too long. As a result, issues are not identified quickly enough to help all pupils make the progress reasonably expected of them. Underdeveloped assessment and tracking procedures are not fully supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils have positive attitudes in lessons. They are strongly encouraged to be active learners and take responsibility for their learning. For example, they work well in different situations, such as in pairs, small groups or during whole-class activities. Pupils recognise that improving teaching is helping them to progress well. They can articulate ways in which teaching has helped them, and give examples. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the initiatives to support them with reading, citing a range of better books and enjoyment at the heart of this drive. Pupils are happy, keen and motivated. This is reflected in the improving attendance, which is now similar to the national average, having gained almost two percentage points from the corresponding period of time in the previous academic year. However, the overall attendance of some vulnerable groups, in particular those who have SEN and/or disabilities as well as disadvantaged pupils, is still low. Since the previous monitoring visit there have been a few fixed-term exclusions. These have been appropriately dealt with under the school's relevant policies.

Leaders continue to ensure that safeguarding is the highest priority. Their systems and processes for safeguarding pupils are robust, including, for example, the recent recruitment process for a teaching post. This showed effective use of the trust's and school's policies in administering the relevant checks and vetting procedures. Staff are appropriately trained in current legislation to be able to protect pupils. They are knowledgeable and their timely steps and actions to look after pupils include effective cooperation between senior leaders and external agencies. Leaders' decisive and appropriate actions ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are protected.

Pupils say they feel safe. They are fully aware of what bullying is and are confident that this is not an issue in the school. On the rare occasions when bullying or other anti-social behaviour happens, pupils have confidence that this will be dealt with swiftly. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They

know what to do to stay safe or report concerns if they are working online. In fact, some appropriately compared this to other 'stranger danger' lessons they have had. Pupils also know how to respond in the event of a fire and can explain the significance of the different colour lanyards that visitors are required to wear around school.

Pupils are proud of their school. They are pleased with recent developments and the continuing trajectory of improvement which is enabling them to enjoy their learning and feel safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the last monitoring visit, most pupils are continuing to make reasonable progress from their previously low starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. The increasing proportions of pupils now catching up and working at age-related expectations, especially in Years 2 and 6, are enabling them to be well prepared for the next stage in their learning. However, there are still some inconsistencies across different year groups and subjects with significant volumes of pupils in a few year groups still needing to 'bridge' the attainment gap. This is being achieved. However, the speed of this is heavily determined by the quality and effectiveness of the class teaching. Work in pupils' books shows sustained improvement in the majority of classes and year groups. Evidence in Year 6 books shows pupils' progress has improved markedly with the majority gaining the skills, knowledge and understanding to be 'secondary-ready'. However, some year groups remain too small for statistical reliability, especially where there are significantly high proportions of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Disadvantaged pupils are starting to catch up. This is diminishing differences for pupils in writing, mathematics and, particularly, reading, by the end of key stage 2. However, attainment of disadvantaged pupils across the school, compared to other non-disadvantaged pupils (nationally), is still adrift. Leaders recognise this and are allocating or targeting resources and provision through the pupil premium grant. Leaders are targeting pupils and are checking their progress through reviews and various monitoring activities.

The rates of pupils' progress across the school are typically showing consistent improvement. However, there are some target groups where achievement is too variable. First, the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those with an EHC plan, is not clearly discernible. This is due, in part, to weak planning in meeting well-defined or targeted next steps. Assessment does not take enough account of pupils' learning and development to instil confidence that they can make rapid progress through personal plans. Second, there are still too few pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reaching the highest standards (greater depth) in reading, writing and mathematics. Indeed, there are no pupils in receipt of the premium funding who are currently working at greater depth in reading,

writing and mathematics across the school.

Pupils' use and knowledge of phonics in the Reception Year and key stage 1 are too inconsistent, especially for those already identified as needing to catch up or make rapid progress. There are still a few pupils who are not securing the prerequisite knowledge of letters and their corresponding sounds quickly enough. This means they are being delayed in being able to segment and blend effectively in reading and writing. They lack age-appropriate knowledge and understanding of letters, sounds and other key vocabulary (such as 'tricky' words which are not phonically decodable) to be able to read fluently. It is imperative that the phonics strategy is reviewed to enable all pupils to make swift progress in their phonic development.

The children's achievement in the Reception Year is continuing to rise well. It has risen from the lowest position in the local authority in 2017, when 37% achieved a good level of development, to at least 73% in 2018. The progress of children is now being tracked from entry points. These show that most children are now making progress expected of them, with some beginning to exceed the early learning goals across the early years foundation stage profile. Outcomes in the early years are showing a marked improvement and most children are ready for key stage 1.

External support

School leaders are continuing to engage effectively with the full range of external support. This has included targeted support and visits through the WHF for phonics and the early years foundation stage. Trustees and directors recognise the need to establish a governing board with strong local representation. This is something that they are working to establish as the trust moves forward from July 2018. School leaders are also working with other bodies, including the local authority, for example to moderate the Reception Year outcomes this summer.