

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 September 2018

Mrs Rachel Bevan
Headteacher
St George's CofE Primary School and Nursery
Birmingham Road
Kidderminster
Worcestershire
DY10 2BX

Dear Mrs Bevan

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

Following my visit with Collette Higgins, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 July 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 January 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 not 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

Charalambos Loizou
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 second monitoring inspection on 17 to 18 July 2018

Evidence

In addition to observing lessons, some of them jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, inspectors scrutinised documents and pupils' work in books. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and staff with management responsibilities, such as special educational needs (SEN) provision, English and mathematics. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) met with the chair of the governing body and held a telephone discussion with a school improvement adviser from the local authority's commissioned service, Babcock Prime Education Service. In addition, HMI also held telephone conferences with the deputy director of education of Worcester diocese and the chief executive officer of the prospective new multi-academy trust, The Black Pear Trust. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff and HMI met with a group of pupils from Year 6 to discuss their views, experiences, safety, and their work and progress. In addition to talking with some parents at the start of each inspection day, the inspector considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

There have been considerable staff changes since the previous monitoring inspection in January 2018. Five classes have been taught by temporary or long-term supply teachers since then and in most of these classes temporary staff have left and new ones been appointed. A new chair of the governing body has taken over since April 2018 to replace the previous chair who resigned. The previous monitoring inspection reported the possibility of the school converting to become an academy. This process has stalled as there has been a change of proposed sponsor. The headteacher will be leaving the school at the end of this academic year. Governors have appointed five permanent teachers to start in September 2018. The current deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher will share responsibility for managing the school from September 2018 until a substantive headteacher is appointed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there is a mixed picture to report but improvements are evident. Senior leaders and governors have worked hard to minimise the disruption caused by staff leaving and joining since the previous monitoring inspection. The recent appointments of permanent teachers for this September bring welcome stability. Governors have improved the way they monitor the school and there are now more systematic checks made to ensure that they gain first-hand experience of the schools' work. However, there is still a great deal to do to ensure that there is consistently effective teaching and learning in all classes across the school.

Safeguarding procedures, as reported previously, meet all statutory requirements. Leaders and governors have taken effective and urgent action to address this particular weakness reported at the time of the inspection, which judged that the school required special measures. Parents are, rightly, confident that their children are safe and secure in school. Pupils feel safe and there are very good relationships between pupils and staff. Since the previous monitoring inspection, leaders and governors have ensured that staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. These improvements are significant.

Although the previous monitoring inspection reported that the school's strategic improvement plan was fit for purpose, this is not the case currently. Leaders have recorded the right priorities for improvement, but the plan has become too unwieldy and lacks focus. Many actions have been taken to address the most urgent weaknesses, such as safeguarding, governance and early years provision. However, the strategic improvement plan includes too many action points and tasks and has lost focus. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to gauge how much progress is being made towards the stated objectives. It is also not clear who is monitoring or evaluating the impact of actions on standards. Although senior leaders and governors are carrying out more purposeful and productive monitoring activities than previously, the improvement plan does not include enough stages or milestones to help leaders check if sufficient progress is being made towards the overall objectives. Working with the local authority's improvement adviser, it is important now to focus on sharpening the next set of priorities and refocusing objectives in the improvement plan.

The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have stepped up their monitoring activities. They have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. As a senior leadership team, they also have the potential and capability to lead by example and are well placed to lead the school in September. Having secured the appointment of permanent teachers for September, senior leaders, governors and the diocese have been diligent in checking that these appointments bring experience and stability to the school. The instability of staffing has hampered leaders' efforts to manage and monitor the performance of staff. At the time of this monitoring inspection, however, it is clear that leaders are acting on the support provided by the local authority to provide feedback to teachers and support staff that helps them improve their practice.

Although early years provision is improving, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is not yet high enough. The most recent assessments for this year show that some children fell short of reaching a good level of development.

Governance has improved and has built upon the recommendations of the external review which took place in May 2017. The relatively new chair of the governing body has been more diligent in ensuring that the governing body exercises its statutory and monitoring functions better than previously. Clerking has improved

and governors are carrying out more visits and checks to gain first-hand experience of the school's work. As a very small governing body, it has plans to expand its membership and bring in additional skills and expertise.

Given the potential stability of staffing for September 2018 and the improvements to governance, the early years and safeguarding, the school is starting to build the necessary capacity for further improvements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers and support staff have responded to the core weaknesses highlighted at the time of the previous inspection. There are some green shoots of improvement but still some way to go to ensure that, in all classes, teachers provide pupils with the right level of challenge. The learning observed in lessons, assessments of the rate of pupils' progress and the work in books show some improvement. However, pupils' work in books and their progress over time shows that in too many lessons teachers do not sufficiently challenge or extend pupils' learning.

Senior leaders use accurate assessments to monitor the progress and performance of pupils. Assessments show that there has been a significant uplift in pupils' achievement in reading and to a lesser extent in mathematics. Teachers are increasingly using assessment as a tool to monitor the progress of different groups. Disadvantaged pupils, for example, are being monitored so that leaders and staff can compare the progress of these pupils with others who are not disadvantaged.

There have been improvements to the teaching of mathematics. However, pupils do not apply reasoning skills to problem-solving activities well enough. Teachers and support staff are still not intervening enough to ensure that pupils use the most efficient methods of calculation when attempting to solve problems. There are still too many occasions when pupils are given mathematics tasks that are too simple or that do not extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding.

The teaching in the early years is improving in both the Nursery class and Reception. The children are now engaged in more stimulating and varied indoor and outdoor activities. Staff need to do more to identify early those children who are capable of reaching a good level of development. Assessments and children's work in their learning journeys (records of their work and progress) shows that some children are capable of doing even better in core skills such as reading, writing and number.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times continues to improve. Despite staff changes, pupils enjoy school and the many activities, visits and events planned for them. 'We love coming to school,' stated one pupil, representing the views of others in the group. Many other pupils have also commented on how the school makes

them feel part of a family: 'I am never afraid to be myself here,' stated one of the older pupils, and another commented: 'The teachers help me want to be at school.' Many other pupils shared their experiences of school with inspectors, saying: 'Behaviour is better now and you belong as part of a family here.' In lessons, pupils are often busy and productive, but there remain instances when pupils stray off task or chat and waste time because teachers' expectations of what they should achieve are not high enough.

Attendance is still below the national average but is not declining. Persistent absence rates remain well below average. Leaders and staff encourage good attendance and most families respond to this. However, there are still a small number of families that either take their children away for extended holidays abroad or do not ensure that their children attend regularly enough. The school works well with the local authority's education welfare officer to ensure that unauthorised absence reduces. Leaders regularly follow up any absences to ensure that pupils are safe when not in school.

Outcomes for pupils

The most recent assessments show that fewer children in the early years reached a good level of development than in previous years. This is partly because some children in this year's Reception class started school with very low skills and abilities. However, leaders need to ensure that more children achieve better in the early years. The assessments and records of children's work and progress in the Nursery show improvement. Most children joining Year 1 this year from the Reception class have developed good early reading and phonic skills.

The most recent assessments for key stages 1 and 2, although unvalidated, show a mixed picture. This reflects the instability of staffing and inconsistent expectations of teachers across classes. At key stage 1, assessments show that more pupils than previously reached age-related standards in reading but there was a slight decline in writing and mathematics compared with the 2017 assessments. There was improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards or learning in greater depth in writing but, overall, pupils should still be doing better in reading, writing and mathematics throughout key stage 1.

At key stage 2, the most recent test results and assessments for 2018, again unvalidated, show significant improvement in reading as many more pupils reached the higher standards and learned to read in greater depth than the previous year. There was also improvement in mathematics as more pupils than previously reached age-related standards. However, fewer pupils reached the higher standards in mathematics than in the previous year's results. There was also a decline in the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching or exceeding age-related standards in writing compared with the previous year. There are still some significant differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged. These differences vary in magnitude across classes, again,

because of the inconsistent expectations of teachers.

External support

The local authority has continued to commission significant support by deploying a school improvement adviser to the school from the Babcock Prime Education Service. This support, combined with that provided by the education service of Worcester Diocese, is helping senior leaders to resolve difficult staffing issues. The local authority and diocese have played a significant role in challenging both leaders and governors to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes. The permanent appointment of class teachers for this September has the potential to bring much-welcome stability to the school.

Senior leaders are being supported well by the local authority so they have a more direct influence on improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders and governors have addressed some significant weaknesses but must now focus on strategic improvement planning to guide further improvements. As reported last time, the local authority's statement of action remains fit for purpose, but the school's strategic improvement plan has become unwieldy and cumbersome as a management tool. More alignment with the local authority's statement of action is required so that the school's strategic plan has clearer milestones and measures of success to help leaders and governors gauge the impact of the school's actions on sustained improvement.