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Denise Fannin
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fannin

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Pius X RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24–25 October 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 June 2018.

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 action 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 executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol City. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in June 2018.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are urgently clarified with the governors, the local authority and the diocese
 - governors develop an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school and hold all leaders, including subject leaders, to account for the quality of education provided
 - the knowledge of the subject leaders is improved so that they can provide support in all key stages
 - an effective safeguarding culture is established
 - there is a more strategic approach developed to eradicate persistent absenteeism and improve pupils' attendance
 - the curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and the next stage of their education
 - the funds for disadvantaged pupils are used strategically to raise pupils' outcomes.
- Improve pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics through the improvement of teaching and learning in all key stages, including early years, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - using assessment information accurately to provide pupils with tasks that challenge them and build on previous learning
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged to deepen and extend their thinking
 - improving the learning support assistants' knowledge and understanding so that they provide more accurate support for pupils.

An external review of the school's use of 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 taken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 24 October 2018 to 25 October 2018

Evidence

The inspector visited each classroom with the headteacher and scrutinised pupils' writing and mathematics books. The inspector also listened to pupils read, while also considering pupils' reading opportunities. The inspector met with the headteacher, middle leaders, groups of pupils, members of the interim executive board, the consultant headteacher and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection, an interim executive board has replaced the governing body. There have been changes to teaching staff in the Reception class and key stage 1. Staffing across key stage 2 has remained stable. Plans are in place to appoint a deputy headteacher to secure further capacity for the school and provide much-needed support for the headteacher.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders are beginning to challenge the historical culture of low expectation across the school. For too long, adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been far too low. Leaders are adamant that the pupils at the school deserve the best education possible. It is clear that the headteacher and the interim executive board have the same high expectations. There is a heightened urgency among leaders to secure sustained improvements.

The interim executive board has acted swiftly to ensure that governance is improved. Forming soon after the previous inspection in June 2018, they have already met twice, and have quickly identified areas of the school's performance that require close attention. Furthermore, they are providing the necessary support to lead the school on its improvement journey.

Leaders' improvement plans prioritise securing a consistent and high standard of teaching, learning and assessment. This is because there was previously a lack of a shared approach across the school. A key success already bearing fruit is the response to the school's revised feedback policy. Teachers are meeting leaders' expectations in this part of their work. However, some targets on the rapid attainment plan are unrealistic. While they are highly aspirational, leaders have not considered what can be achieved within the timeframes allocated.

Currently, a barrier to securing improvements is a lack of accurate information about pupils' progress and attainment. This not only hinders leaders' ability to pinpoint areas of the school's performance that require attention but also hampers teachers in providing activities that closely meet the emerging needs of pupils.

The school's pupil premium strategy during the previous academic year was not fit for purpose, resulting in the need for a pupil premium review. This review will be completed shortly. However, the current pupil premium strategy is much improved and prioritises quality teaching and will be monitored for its impact at my next visit.

Leaders have acted swiftly to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding. Recruitment procedures are strengthened, and leaders ensure that this is recorded on the school's single central record. Leaders have also improved the safeguarding procedures for visitors when they access the premises and building. Staff are beginning to respond to leaders' expectations, but an effective safeguarding culture is yet to be fully established. There remains a lack of vigilance with regard to the extent that adults supervise pupils' well-being. While the headteacher is carrying out regular checks, it is not clear that without her direct involvement, children would be closely supervised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are improving but not yet consistently high enough. In some classes, staff assume that pupils do not already know what they are about to teach rather than complete accurate assessments to check and plan activities accordingly. As a result, teachers are not meeting pupils' learning needs well enough. In key stage 2, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not swiftly being addressed. This is particularly the case for lower-attaining pupils.

Teachers remain too accepting of basic errors, particularly with younger pupils. In addition, where pupils need support, staff do not recognise this quickly enough. For example, in mathematics, a high proportion of pupils are still writing their numbers back to front; there are times that this results in their incorrect answers to calculations. Furthermore, pupils have an underdeveloped pencil grip; this leads to a lack of control when forming letters in their writing.

Teachers and support staff are not confident in applying the school's approach to teaching children to read and this filters down into the classrooms. During some phonics sessions, pupils find it hard to remember what it is they are learning, and in some cases, pupils are not regularly encouraged to read back what they have written down. On too many occasions pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, are provided with books they cannot read because the books provided do not match pupils' developing reading capabilities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils behave well. They are compliant in lessons and the school is generally calm. In class, pupils are keen to share their learning and eager to show their successes. However, where expectations in lessons are low, pupils tend to drift off focus and some low-level behaviour emerges. In addition, there are occasions when pupils'

pride in their work falls short of leaders' expectations. Once more, this occurs where expectations of pupils are too low. There is evidence of well-presented work in books that pupils are proud of, but this is not yet consistent across the school.

Pupils' absence is slowly improving but continues to be below national averages. Leaders have improved the systems for finding out when pupils are absent in a timely manner. Leaders conduct regular checks on pupils' absence and consult with the educational welfare officer in this work.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders, managers and governors recognise that outcomes across the school remain low. Too many pupils continue to make slow progress from their starting points. While there are indications that leaders are addressing the low proportion of pupils working at expectations for their age, lower-attaining pupils are not yet catching up with their peers. This is because staff are not consistently adapting learning activities to ensure that they closely meet these pupils' needs.

Too many of the most able pupils have made slow progress so far this academic year. Work remains too easy for these pupils because they are not regularly provided with activities that stretch and challenge them to reach the higher standards.

External support

Support for the school has been effective. The interim executive board consists of members who ensure that the school gets the support it needs. They acknowledge that it is vital that once support has been given, this results in an improvement in the school's performance. The interim executive board wasted no time in identifying areas of the school's performance that require urgent attention.

Through a collaborative approach with the local authority, there is a sense of momentum and belief that the school's trajectory towards improvement will be successful. All parties that make up external support acknowledge that challenging underperformance will continue to be an important part of their work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders and managers ensure that teachers across early years and key stage 1 increase their confidence in applying the school's approach to early reading so that children and pupils make improved progress in phonics.