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Mrs Clare Snape and Mrs Louise Low
St George's CofE Primary School and Nursery
Birmingham Road
Kidderminster
Worcestershire
DY10 2BX

Dear Mrs Snape and Mrs Low

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

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 November 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 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 improvement 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 governing body, the director of education for the Diocese for Worcestershire, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

- 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 third monitoring inspection on 6 to 7 November 2018

Evidence

I observed lessons and scrutinised school documents and pupils' work. Meetings were held with the two acting headteachers, the chief executive of the Black Pear Trust (BPT), the head of Hollymount School, the coordinator for special educational needs, the school improvement adviser from Babcock Prime Education Service and two recently appointed governors. I also had a telephone conversation with the school effectiveness lead for the Diocese of Worcestershire.

Context

Almost all classes were taught by temporary or supply staff in the academic year 2017 to 2018. Five permanent staff were appointed for September 2018, although one teacher left soon after taking up the post. The vacancy has been temporarily filled by two part-time teachers from St George's until a permanent replacement can be appointed. The deputy and assistant headteachers continue to share responsibility for managing the school until a substantive headteacher is appointed next year. The Black Pear Trust is working with the Department for Education, the local authority and the Worcestershire Diocese in preparation for their sponsorship of St George's early next year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The two acting headteachers have continued to work in close partnership to manage an exceptional year of staffing turbulence. They continue to receive significant support from the chief executive officer of BPT and the headteacher of Hollymount School, which is one of two academies within the trust. Since September, school leaders and BPT representatives have successfully shared their high expectations with staff; provided substantial induction and training; and closely monitored the quality of teaching and learning.

School leaders have continued to place safeguarding at the centre of the school's work, where all staff, regardless of their role, are responsible for the pupils' safety and well-being. The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and closely follows the most recent national guidelines. The policy is sufficiently detailed, relevant and informative. Safeguarding information is easily accessible and photographs of the designated safeguarding leaders are displayed around the school. The system for recording concerns is implemented consistently by all staff and records of concern are kept securely. All new staff receive initial training on safeguarding as part of their induction and safeguarding is a standing item on all staff meeting agendas. A consistent, vigilant approach is expected of all staff and thorough systems are in place to record and refer concerns. Leaders maintain close links with external agencies to ensure that they are kept well informed about ongoing support for referred pupils. Pupils are also kept up to date about keeping safe in assemblies. The pupils' safety committee has recently conducted a pupil questionnaire to raise

awareness of a variety of issues.

The chair of the governing body is the governor representative for safeguarding. Governors regularly monitor the systems, procedures and policies applicable to safeguarding. They are also kept up to date with current referrals and the actions taken over time. Thorough checks on health and safety aspects of the school site are conducted regularly and findings are swiftly reported and acted upon.

Leaders have speedily developed their practice in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, following the appointments of the majority of teachers in September this year. Leaders received significant and highly valued support from BPT to ensure that their monitoring of teaching staff was vigilant and consistent. Leaders introduced phase reviews to enable staff to learn from each other and share good practice. Leaders are now fully aware of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. They identified that some teachers required a greater knowledge of individual subjects. In addition, they identified some weaknesses in teachers' ability to pitch learning activities appropriately to pupils' capabilities and provide the necessary challenge for the most able pupils. Leaders purchased new resources to help support staff, particularly in the teaching of reading comprehension and phonics.

Leaders and staff from the BPT have clearly communicated a common understanding about how specific subjects should be taught in order to raise staff's expectations of what pupils should know, understand and do. Deeper assessments of pupils' attainment and progress has helped leaders and staff to identify those pupils who are at risk of falling further behind and those who would benefit from greater challenge.

Leaders and BPT representatives have ensured that the school development plan focuses sharply on the most important priorities. The strategies for improvement are regularly reviewed. However, they are at an early stage of implementation and therefore the impact of these new initiatives is not yet fully evident.

All reviews of staff performance are complete. Evaluations of staff are closely related to their pupils' progress. As a result, teachers are now acutely aware of their accountability in ensuring that pupils make sufficient progress to make up for previous lost ground. Leaders' evaluations are accurate and appropriate support is provided where necessary. Nevertheless, leaders are aware of suitable formal routes to take where staff performance does not meet the required standard.

Leaders have created clear intentions and approaches to meet the demands of the curriculum. While there is still a strong focus on reading, writing and mathematics, staff are increasingly able to see opportunities for these skills to be applied in a range of subjects.

The capacity to develop middle leaders remains limited until staff have settled into their new roles and routines. However, emerging strengths have been identified and

leaders intend to continue to develop the necessary skills in individual staff so that they are able to consider greater responsibility in the future.

Governors conducted an audit of their skills to enable them to identify gaps in their area of expertise and inform future governor appointments. Governors are increasingly proactive and now visit the school regularly, seek independent evidence and report their findings to leaders and governors. They have produced their own plan for ongoing training and they are far from complacent about their own developmental needs. Recently appointed governors are keen to be involved and have quickly acquired a knowledge of the school's improvement priorities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment were hampered by the huge turnover of teaching staff in the last academic year. Most of the teaching staff are new. Consequently, the acting headteachers and BPT representatives introduced a range of non-negotiable expectations regarding teachers' practice, conduct and planning. In addition, they sharpened staff focus on the teaching of phonics, basic reading skills, comprehension and mathematics. Many of these initiatives are relatively new but staff are keen to develop their teaching skills and they appreciate the significant support provided by BPT.

Staff have a greater awareness of age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, some teachers' expectations of pupils are not yet high enough. Therefore, not all teachers plan sufficient challenge for the higher-ability pupils. Occasionally during lessons, teachers are not aware of those pupils who are ready to move on at a faster pace. In addition, shared learning intentions are occasionally ill-defined and fail to help pupils understand what is required of them. Teachers do not consistently equip pupils with the necessary vocabulary to enable them to effectively explain their understanding or fulfil given written tasks.

Pupils' progress was secure in those lessons where teachers took account of gaps in pupils' knowledge and planned tasks which built on prior learning. Furthermore, teachers' informal assessments through observation or questioning helped to strengthen pupils' self-confidence and to move them on to the next challenge. Support for pupils in these classes was purposeful and met the specific needs of individuals or groups of pupils. Pupils reported that in these lessons the work was 'pitched just right'. Pupils explained that sometimes they could do the work easily, but additional challenges were given to make them think more deeply.

Leaders and BPT representatives are sharply aware of the urgency to bridge the gaps in pupils' prior knowledge and raise teachers' expectations of pupils. They have worked hard to support staff in planning a sequence of learning to secure better rates of progress. Further training is planned to strengthen teachers' questioning of pupils during lessons, so they are more aware of pupils' misconceptions or readiness to move on. Training is also planned to strengthen teachers' knowledge of phonics and mathematical enquiry.

Since the last monitoring inspection, BPT representatives have provided significant support and training to improve teaching in the early years. With the help of BPT, staff assessed children on entry to the early years classes in September 2018. More than half of the children entering the Reception class were assessed as having knowledge and skills below that expected for their age. Leaders identified three key priority areas for immediate attention and continue to support staff in their planning.

Evidence of good progress is emerging in the Nursery class and appropriate targets have been set and shared with parents. Resources and planned learning are of genuine interest to the children and outdoor facilities are attractive and inviting. The adults know the children well and they are sensitive to children's readiness for learning. They fully engage with children, demonstrate appropriate vocabulary and expect the same of children in return. Nursery children learn with a sense of fun and investigation, so although they are learning they think they are playing.

When learning is less effective in the early years, progress over time is not evident. For example, some children still grasp their pencils incorrectly and do not form letters and numbers properly. Where teaching is weaker, adults' expectations of children are not high enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Where teachers' expectations are high, pupils work with resilience, determination and perseverance. These pupils clearly want to succeed, and they appreciate how to be successful learners.

Pupils of all ages have settled well with their new teachers and continue to be polite and respectful to peers and others. However, where teachers have not established clear routines pupils waste time unnecessarily, for example when taking off coats after playtimes. In addition, when pupils are given tasks that are unclear or too easy, they choose to chatter rather than persevere.

Attendance is tracked carefully, and leaders lose no time in working with the education welfare officer when concerns arise. Attendance by the end of the academic year 2017/2018, improved to 95.2% However, rates of attendance remain below the national average. Leaders track incidents of poor punctuality. They take appropriate action where necessary and work closely with parents.

Outcomes for pupils

Historical and more recent weak teaching led to low attainment by the end of the school year in almost all year groups.

The proportion of children leaving the Reception Year with a good level of development was below the national average in 2018. Furthermore, fewer children

achieved a good level of development than in the previous two years. The proportion of children exceeding the expected level was well below the national average in most of the early learning goals.

The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was well below the national and local averages in 2018 and there was a significant decline in standards compared with the previous two years.

Attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 fell below that of the previous year in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment at the expected standard or that of greater depth was below the national and local averages in all subjects.

By the end of key stage 2, provisional results suggest that pupils made average progress in reading when compared with other pupils nationally but below average progress in writing and mathematics. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was particularly weak.

Attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 remained below the national average in writing and mathematics. However, an above-average proportion attained the higher standard in reading.

In too many classes, pupils' written work is not good enough. Incorrect letter and number formation, as well other common errors in spelling and punctuation continue over time. In the few classes where writing was showing marked improvement, a full range of writing skills and purposes were practised and applied to other subjects, particularly history.

External support

The local authority continued to commission Babcock Prime Education Service to support the school at a time of exceptional difficulties. Significant and frequent support was provided in partnership with the education services of Worcester Diocese. However, the long-term absence of key leaders, together with the transient nature of staffing, meant that support had limited impact over time. The Black Pear Trust was invited to provide substantial support from September this year to induct, train and support newly appointed staff as well as provide extensive support for the two acting headteachers. The support and training has helped stabilise the school in preparation for its future academy status and is highly valued by school leaders, governors and staff.