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Mrs Sandra Kiddle
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Dear Mrs Kiddle

Special measures monitoring inspection of North Cadbury Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 to 29 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 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 January 2018.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - setting clear priorities for improvement which leaders and governors frequently check and evaluate for impact
 - strengthening governance swiftly, so that governors carry out their roles and responsibilities to improve the quality of education pupils receive effectively
 - implementing a robust, structured programme of training and support to equip subject leaders with the skills they need to be highly effective
 - planning a curriculum that develops pupils' skills, so that they make the best possible progress across all subjects
 - securing the leadership in the early years provision in order to provide children with high-quality teaching and learning.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - assess accurately what pupils know, understand and can do, and use this information to plan learning that is matched well to pupils' needs
 - plan activities at the right level of challenge for pupils, especially for those of average ability, the most able and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
 - help pupils to use and practise their skills in writing and mathematics across a range of subjects
 - question pupils effectively in order to assess, probe and deepen their learning
 - provide pupils with the information they need to improve their learning
 - learn from best practice in other schools.
- Urgently improve pupils' achievement, especially in key stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils are able to achieve, especially in writing and mathematics
 - teaching inspires, excites and challenges pupils to think more deeply about their learning, especially for those of average ability and the most able
 - the subject knowledge of staff in mathematics and English is strong enough to enable their work to be effective.

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

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

November 2018

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, and the chair and other members of the governing body. There was also a meeting with the local leader of education who supports the school, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection, the number of pupils has fallen: there are now 77 pupils on roll. Two teachers have left the school and two joined the school in April 2018. These teachers are also the new leaders for early years, English and mathematics. One member of staff who worked part time has become full time. The headteacher has taken responsibility for pupils with SEND.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

A review of governance took place in May 2018. Following the review, the local authority arranged for three new governors, including a national lead for governance, to join the governing body. As a result of these changes, governors are clearer about their roles and responsibilities, and working to a detailed governor action plan. They have reviewed key school policies. A review of the pupil premium has taken place recently, the findings of which are still in draft form.

Governors are working to secure new arrangements for the school to become an academy within an academy trust. This process is under way but has not yet been fully agreed.

A school improvement plan was adopted by the governing body in May 2018. The plan sets out priorities and milestones each term for reading, writing and mathematics for each year group. Governors reviewed the plan each month during the summer term to assess the impact of improvement on outcomes for pupils. However, since September, there has not been as frequent, or as rigorous, checking. In addition, the latest plan does not include planned milestones for improvements. Therefore, governors are not able to challenge the impact of improvements to reading, writing and mathematics.

Leaders are not ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improves quickly enough. This is because leaders are over reliant on external support to complete monitoring activities such as looking at pupils' books or observing learning in lessons. Teachers do not receive feedback that supports them to improve the quality of their work.

Leaders, including the leaders for English and mathematics, have attended training

events to support their subject knowledge. However, they are not clear about how to coordinate the actions for each subject so that there are improvements across the school. As a result, improvements are introduced, but not consistently followed through to ensure that they make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning. This is slowing the progress that the school is making in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

The curriculum is not planned out clearly to ensure that pupils can apply the skills they have learned in other subject areas. There are examples of pupils using their writing skills in other subjects such as history, but this is not linked to a planned progression of skills across the school. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat learning that they have completed before, whereas they may be missing other skills altogether. A curriculum map that sets out a plan for skills and knowledge across subjects for each year group was planned for introduction in September, but is still being developed.

Leadership of early years has improved since the previous inspection. As a result, more children left the Reception class last year prepared for their learning in Year 1 than in previous years. The new early years leader uses her detailed assessment of how well children are developing their skills to plan fun, engaging learning activities. The Nursery and Reception staff now liaise more closely to share how they work. Parents and carers are delighted with the changes. Those who gave their views are very pleased with the start their children are having in the early years classes. They say that communication is good and that their children enjoy school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Recent training for staff in phonics, spelling and mathematics has supported their subject knowledge. There are additional teaching sessions specifically to improve pupils' spelling. There are new approaches to ensure that pupils develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. However, leaders do not rigorously check that new initiatives are taught well across the school.

The weaknesses seen in assessment at the previous inspection remain. Too often, teachers and teaching assistants do not notice when pupils are finding work too hard or when they are finding work too easy. Learning is not adapted well to match what pupils know, understand and can do. Therefore, pupils do not make the progress they should. For example, middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils often repeat similar questions in mathematics rather than being challenged to use their skills to solve more complex problems.

In some lessons, teachers' questioning helps pupils to think more deeply about their learning. Reception children enjoyed thinking about what the big bear might say following a teacher-led discussion about characters in the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. In the Nursery class, children enthusiastically discussed with staff how to make a train track. Questions such as, 'can you find the straight track?'

helped to introduce new vocabulary. However, questioning is not effective across the school. As a result, some pupils do not engage as well with their learning.

Some pupils who have special educational needs do not have the extra support they need to thrive. Individual plans designed to outline the targets and teaching strategies to support pupils are not precise and are too rarely reviewed to be helpful to staff when planning and supporting work for pupils.

There has been a focus on improving spelling and handwriting skills across the school. Some staff model cursive handwriting to support pupils as they improve their handwriting. However, this is not applied consistently across the school. Pupils are aware of the need to improve their spelling and handwriting. However, pupils' work shows that for many, the weaknesses in spelling remain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

As seen at the previous inspection, pupils are polite and well mannered. They speak confidently and proudly about their school. They feel safe and well cared for. More pupils are learning how to be resilient learners. For example, in the Years 5 and 6 class, pupils worked hard at a research activity to find out about Charles Dickens to complete a factual report. They cooperated with each other well and were keen to complete the task. In the Nursery class, children successfully completed a floor jigsaw together, maintaining their interest and drive to get the job finished.

Where learning is not well matched to pupils' needs, behaviour deteriorates, and pupils become restless. When work is too easy or is not interesting for pupils, some do not complete tasks or make poor attempts to do so.

Outcomes for pupils

Raised expectations from April 2018 resulted in improvements to some end-of-year outcomes for pupils. For example, more children left the Reception class than in previous years with the skills needed for Year 1. More pupils reached the expected standard for phonics in Year 1, and the proportions of Year 6 pupils making good progress in writing improved on previous years.

However, outcomes in mathematics in key stage 1 declined, with only around half of the pupils making substantial progress and no pupils achieving strongly in mathematics or writing. Only half of the pupils in Year 6 reached an average standard in the grammar, punctuation and spelling tests.

The progress that pupils make across the school has been, and remains, too low. Current assessment information shows that too few pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 are catching up and achieving as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics.

Weak assessment systems in the school mean that teachers do not intervene quickly enough to challenge pupils' misconceptions. For example, too little is done to check how well pupils in key stage 1 are improving their phonics skills. This slows their progress.

Pupils' books show that pupils do not apply their writing skills sufficiently across a range of subjects, particularly in key stage 1. In key stage 2, pupils rarely complete stories, as weaknesses in the writing curriculum mean that writing is heavily based on non-fiction topics.

In mathematics, there is not enough challenge for middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils. They often complete many similar examples in their books without moving on to more complex problems.

External support

In addition to arranging for new governors to join the school's governing body, the local authority commissioned a local leader of education to provide support for the school. Regular visits each term aim to support leaders in implementing the actions outlined in the school development plan.

The local authority provides an educational adviser who visits the school to check on the school's progress. Regular 'core group' meetings assess the impact of the support on improvements at the school.

Despite this support and challenge, there is insufficient progress in improving the quality of leadership and management, and therefore the quality of teaching is not improving rapidly enough.