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Mrs Finola Gill
Headteacher
St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School
Polhearne Way
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Devon
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Dear Mrs Gill

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Adrian Massey, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 January 2019, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 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 may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Plymouth Catholic and Anglican Schools Trust (Plymouth CAST), the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Torbay. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - securing leadership capacity in the school so that leaders are not overly reliant on external support
 - establishing clear systems for the performance management of staff so that teachers receive guidance and support to improve the quality of their teaching and to raise standards
 - implementing a consistent and accurate system for assessing and tracking pupils' learning
 - ensuring that governors understand the impact teaching has on pupils' progress and check more rigorously on the school's performance, holding leaders fully to account for the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
 - developing clear lines of communication with parents
 - making sure that provision in the early years meets the needs of the children.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve and improve rates of pupils' progress
 - accurately understand what pupils can and cannot do and use this knowledge to eradicate any gaps in learning
 - increase their subject knowledge, especially about writing, so that they can plan the next steps in pupils' learning effectively, particularly for the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that rates of attendance improve for all groups of pupils
 - developing pupils' understanding of bullying and knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is stimulating and supports children's explorations and development of their imagination
 - assessment is improved by using it effectively to ensure that planned learning and provision builds on what children know, can do and understand, particularly in writing for boys and the most able children.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in

order to assess how to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 15 to 16 January 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and the trust's specialist leader in education (early years). The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the interim advisory board (IAB), the chief executive officer of Plymouth CAST, the trust's deputy director of education and standards and the local authority's early years adviser by telephone. Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection and met with parents at the end of the school day.

Context

Since the monitoring inspection in October 2017, the teacher in the early years and Year 1 class has left the school. A few pupils have left, and several have joined the school. As a result, the number of pupils on the school roll has increased to 105.

The trust has attempted to recruit local governors, but this has not been successful. Consequently, the IAB remains in place.

A consultant headteacher and the trust's deputy director of education and standards continue to provide support to the school. Their involvement is much less than it was at the previous monitoring inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have continued the drive to improve standards. Tangible differences can be seen in pupils' work, particularly in their writing. A concentrated focus on developing a new curriculum has taken place. This is ensuring that pupils have access to a much broader curriculum and pupils enjoy the subjects they study. Leaders are developing the assessment framework to accompany the new curriculum plans. Teachers have embraced this new approach.

At the inspection in February 2017, there were no arrangements for the performance management of staff. Senior leaders have addressed this gap and they have plans that set appropriate expectations. Leaders are providing support for teachers where weaknesses have been identified. The termly reviews show that staff performance is improving. Teaching assistants have clear expectations about their role in improving pupils' outcomes and the support that pupils will need to be successful. The specialist training that some teaching assistants require is not always as timely as it needs to be.

Leaders make effective use of the support from a consultant headteacher and the trust's deputy director as they develop their plans. They have a clear understanding of the weaknesses, particularly in the early years. Leaders continue to work with a

specialist leader in education from another school in the trust to provide advice and guidance to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years.

The IAB maintains a close scrutiny on the school's work. They recognise the improvements made but note that there is more work still to be done, particularly in the early years and key stage 1.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers' assessments in key stages 1 and 2 are broadly accurate. Teachers have a clear understanding of the age-related expectations in English and mathematics. Teachers are much more keenly aware of what pupils know and can do in English and mathematics. Most teachers use this information well and plan activities to address any gaps in learning from the past. For example, in Year 6, teaching staff are addressing pupils' lack of confidence in calculating percentages.

Teaching staff in key stage 2 use their assessment information effectively to provide pupils with a greater level of challenge. Therefore, the rates of progress in these year groups are stronger. Although progress is evident in key stage 1, it is much stronger in the older year groups.

The introduction of the new curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Through their studies, pupils have developed their geographical understanding of Europe as it changed during the early part of the 20th century. Their work shows an empathy with soldiers who served in the trenches and an understanding of the chronology of events. However, the work in key stage 1 is less well developed.

In the foundation subjects, there are clear, overarching aims for the learning. Leaders have defined their expectations for each year group, but teachers have not yet had the training they need. Consequently, learning is not yet planned sufficiently well to ensure that pupils from different year groups in the same class are appropriately challenged.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, teaching staff in the early years have not demonstrated the range of teaching strategies needed to ensure that children are securely on track to meet the early learning goals in reading and writing. They have not used assessments of children's learning effectively to ensure that future planning builds upon what children already know, can do and understand. Sometimes, adults in the early years do not seek to develop children's understanding when talking with them about the activities. Learning is not always checked by adults before moving on.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school has been successful in ensuring that rates of attendance have continued to improve since the previous monitoring inspection. Pupils' attendance is now only

slightly below national levels. However, there are some notable differences between year groups. Children in the Reception Year do not attend school as regularly as other year groups. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attend slightly less well than their classmates.

Persistent absenteeism has reduced dramatically and very few pupils now miss school regularly. This is a significant improvement from the inspection in February 2017 when almost one in 10 pupils were regularly absent.

Pupils are keen to attend school. One pupil, typical of many, commented, 'I like the afternoons better with the new curriculum. It is much more hands on, we have more control over our own learning.'

Pupils are considerate of one another and follow instructions in most classes. However, children in the Reception Year and Year 1 do not demonstrate the same positive attitudes towards their learning as pupils in the other classes.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils in key stage 2 are catching up quickly. However, many are still working at standards below those expected for their age. Progress is less strong in the early years and key stage 1.

As a result of leaders' drive to improve pupils' writing and staff training, expectations are now much higher. Pupils now demonstrate positive attitudes towards their writing because teachers use their subject knowledge of writing well to plan learning that engages pupils. Consequently, pupils' writing is increasingly sophisticated and technically accurate. A greater proportion of pupils in key stage 2 are working towards the highest standard.

Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress in their writing as a result of leaders championing the cause for this group and the concentrated focus that staff have on ensuring their success.

The quality of education in the early years remains weak. The activities planned for children do not provide sufficiently interesting or demanding experiences to ensure that they make good progress.

External support

Support is now only provided through the multi-academy trust. The trust's deputy director of education and standards and a consultant headteacher continue to support senior leaders but this is much reduced. Leaders make effective use of their advice and support in improving the quality of teaching and in developing the new curriculum.

A specialist leader of education continues to provide advice and guidance on the early years. Due to the changes in staffing, the impact of this support has been limited.