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Miss Wendy Robinson
Headteacher
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Maidstone
Kent
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Dear Miss Robinson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Archbishop Courtenay Primary School

Following my visit with Lucy English, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 12 to 13 March 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 June 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that 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 of the Aquila multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Canterbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that the school follows its own procedures when maintaining a single central record and eradicates inconsistencies
 - clarifying the lines of accountability and embedding robust and reliable central record keeping of the actions taken to support vulnerable pupils
 - ensuring that the local governing body accurately oversees that all of the school's policies and procedures meet requirements
 - making sure that all staff are clear on safeguarding procedures
 - improving evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and using this to underpin sustained improvements to teaching and learning
 - ensuring that the wider curriculum is broad and balanced, meets pupils' needs and better prepares them for secondary school.
- Improve the rates of attendance for all pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they at least match national averages.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all groups of pupils make strong progress over time, through leaders:
 - more thoroughly checking the quality of pupils' work across the curriculum and holding teachers to account for the progress they make
 - facilitating training to support key stage 2 teachers to improve their subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics and science
 - supporting all teachers to develop their questioning and feedback to pupils in line with the best examples seen in the school
 - ensuring that teaching assistants have access to planning and information enabling them to more effectively support pupils.
- Continue to improve outcomes in mathematics, reading and writing in key stage 1 and ensure that rapid improvements are made to these areas in key stage 2 by:
 - improving the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' learning
 - improving teachers' planning and organisation of lessons so that they take into account the needs of all pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information more effectively to check the progress that pupils make from their starting points and give them

feedback about how to improve their work.

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 use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 12 March 2019 to 13 March 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher at various points during the inspection. They also met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Together with senior leaders or hub leaders, inspectors visited all classes to observe learning and talk to pupils about their work and look at their books.

Inspectors met with the chair of trustees and another trustee, the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.

Context

Since the previous visit, one teacher has left the school. There are currently two teachers absent. Several classes continue to be taught by supply teachers.

The headteacher will be leaving the school at the end of the summer term. Another headteacher from within the trust who has been supporting the school informally will become executive headteacher from April 2019 to help provide a smooth transition.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

School leaders have continued to face challenges with staffing, and this has had a significant impact on the pace of improvement. Despite the challenges, leaders remain positive and determined to make a difference and to implement the changes needed.

Leaders know what is working well and have also identified the issues that still need to be addressed. Many actions and plans are now in place, although it is too soon to see the difference they are making for pupils, especially where there are not substantive class teachers.

Hub leaders (who are each responsible for two year groups) are beginning to have a greater impact on improving teaching and standards in the school. They have been very well supported by the trust and senior leaders to improve their leadership skills. Hub leaders have been given additional time, allowing them to check on standards in classes and to help teachers to plan across the curriculum. While there has been significant improvement in the impact of the work of these middle leaders, further progress is being thwarted by the lack of substantive staff in some teams.

The SENCo has a very secure understanding of the needs of individual pupils and

the main needs overall in the school. She has introduced a variety of successful strategies that have helped pupils to make progress from their starting points, for example in therapy to address speech and language needs.

Trustees, working with governors and leaders, have put in place sensible succession plans to take the school forward when the headteacher leaves in the summer. They have appointed an executive headteacher with effect from April 2019.

The executive headteacher designate and his team from his current school are already working with senior and middle leaders to help improve systems and processes at Archbishop Courtenay. For example, they have worked with hub leaders to improve pupil progress meetings.

Trustees receive regular information about the performance of the school, thereby ensuring that they are well informed about strengths and weaknesses. Governors, under the chair's skilled leadership, are far more in tune with the pace of change needed to remove the school from special measures. There is a renewed determination to do this.

Regular visits from the trust's school improvement partner continue to provide impartial support and challenge. Her reports confirm the improvements in middle leadership and the emerging impact of this seen by inspectors during this visit.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is too variable because some classes do not have substantive teachers. Leaders are still having to find supply teachers to provide short-term cover. Leaders can correctly identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Since the previous visit, they have been quicker to tackle underperformance.

Some teachers focus only on some of the pupils in the class, and do not routinely include the whole class. Some teachers do not provide lower-ability pupils with the support that they need in order to understand how to do an activity. They do not routinely check that they have understood one task before moving on. This hinders their progress. For example, pupils who were not able to answer questions on the one, two or ten multiplication tables set themselves a target of the nine multiplication table for their next test.

Inspection evidence showed that there is variation in teachers' subject knowledge when it comes to using punctuation and grammar correctly. Some marking shows that certain adults make errors themselves and do not have the skills or knowledge to move learning forward as quickly as they could.

Where teaching is more successful, teachers have high expectations and support pupils to develop their work well. These teachers explain ideas and learning

requirements clearly. They use resources well to help demonstrate their ideas. They provide clear feedback that helps pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematics. Some adults inspire pupils and explain ideas clearly, and some have increased their expectations of what pupils can achieve. The most effective teaching engages pupils well and causes them to think deeply about issues such as fair trade.

The most consistently strong teaching is in early years. Children are given opportunities to solve problems and work together well with their friends to do this. The mixture of activities helps the children to work at a mostly appropriate level, although the most able children responded well when they were challenged more. Adults intervene well to help children to use the correct vocabulary or to extend the detail in their descriptions. Children who speak English as an additional language are supported very well, which gives them increased confidence.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Attendance remains stubbornly low and persistent absence is not improving. Staff work hard with families and feel they are doing as much as they can to help. However, leaders and staff have not found any particular strategies that have helped attendance to markedly improve. Governors know there is more that needs to be done to tackle this and have made it an urgent priority.

Leaders have worked diligently towards the removal of the need to use part-time timetables. Nearly all pupils are now receiving the full-time education to which they are entitled.

Around the school, behaviour is positive. Pupils listen respectfully to each other. They answer questions sensibly and with enthusiasm. They move between activities well, including when they have new supply teachers. Most pupils are proud of their work and keen to explain and show it to visitors. They like the reward systems and are proud to 'move up' through the various stages.

Pupils are respectful. In a philosophy lesson, pupils used the agreed structures well to indicate when they had an idea to contribute. They listened well to each other, even when they didn't agree with each other's ideas.

Outcomes for pupils

Children in early years are making good progress from their low starting points. This was confirmed by inspectors' observations during this visit and on previous visits. Books and online journals showed that children from a range of different starting points are being supported well to make progress over time.

Outcomes for pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 remain inconsistent and, overall, are below what leaders expect. In some year groups, where there are substantive

teachers, pupils are making progress that is more in line with what leaders expect.

Leaders have used an external scheme of intervention strategies selectively. They say that these strategies are having a positive impact on pupils in Year 6, especially in mathematics where they are filling historical gaps in knowledge. Where this is the case, it allows pupils to move on to more challenging learning. However, there are no clear targets or objectives set for this work. Inspectors' observations indicated that planned resources are not used systematically. There is no sense of urgency for this work to become embedded in other year groups.

Key stage 1 books showed that pupils are making some progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics. The majority of pupils are developing their understanding of sentence structure and grammar to make their writing more interesting, for example by using adverbs and noun phrases appropriately. Many key stage 1 pupils are confident enough to read back their own writing accurately. Key stage 1 pupils are beginning to solve increasingly challenging word problems in mathematics. Overall attainment in key stage 1 remains low, including the progress towards meeting the Year 1 phonics screening check standard.

Despite the sterling efforts of the hub leader, many pupils in Years 3 and 4 are falling further behind because they do not have substantive teachers. Attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling is below expectations.

Overall, pupils' books in Years 5 and 6 indicate that they are being supported to make progress from their starting points. Work is often structured well, which helps pupils to develop and sustain their writing. Writing skills are transferred from English lessons to other subjects, including science. Science books indicated that a wide range of scientific thought and experimentation is undertaken, and pupils make good progress in this area.