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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Richard Lucas
Interim Executive Headteacher
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Church Road
Cainscross
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 4JE

Dear Mr Lucas

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 July 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 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 July 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 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 of Gloucester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted

website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - supporting leaders in developing the skills to carry out their roles effectively
 - putting in place a thorough and coherent approach that improves the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensuring that checks on the quality of teaching take account of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
 - governors fulfilling their statutory duties to ensure that pupils' progress improves swiftly
 - making sure that funding provided for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively.
- Through effective teaching and learning, raise standards achieved by pupils by ensuring that teachers:
 - receive the training they need to improve the quality of their teaching
 - have high expectations of what pupils know, understand and can do
 - provide pupils with the skills and knowledge required to make rapid progress
 - use accurate assessments to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils, especially the most able, disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - develop pupils' mathematical knowledge and reasoning skills.
- Improve the leadership of the early years foundation stage so that:
 - teachers' assessment is accurate and used to plan learning that sustains children's interest so that they achieve well, especially the most able children
 - children are well prepared for Year 1.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 9 to 10 July 2019

Evidence

The inspector observed learning in every class, scrutinised documents and met with governors, a representative from the local authority, pupils in key stage 2, subject leaders and teachers. Discussions were held with the interim executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher. A telephone call was made to the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Diocese of Gloucester Academy Trust (DGAT).

Context

The previous deputy headteacher of the school left during the inspection in July 2018 and did not return. The headteacher has been absent from school since December 2018. The business manager left in February 2019. The special educational needs coordinator left at Easter 2019.

A new chair of the governing body took up post in September 2018. Several governors have left and there are vacancies on the governing body.

A new subject leader for mathematics was appointed in September 2018. She had been one of the school's subject leaders for English previously.

In October 2018, the local authority seconded an acting deputy headteacher to the school. In February 2019, the local authority appointed an interim executive headteacher to work at the school for two days a week. In February 2019, school leaders appointed a finance officer, and in May 2019 a pastoral support worker.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The local authority set up a leadership group in September 2018 to monitor the impact of actions to improve the school's performance. The members of the group were the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the local authority performance adviser, and the chair of the governing body. This group still exists.

Since your appointment, there has been an effective start to strategically improving the school. You have streamlined the school's statement of intent and focused on improving teaching and learning. Leaders have provided teachers with clear structures for improving their practice, which you review fortnightly. In addition, leaders are giving teachers clear information about the next steps to take to improve their performance. Consequently, teaching has become more consistent across the school and is helping pupils to make better progress.

Until recently, the school's assessment information was not secure as the data was inaccurate, and teachers' expectations were too low. Leaders have trained teachers to know what pupils are expected to learn in different year groups in reading,

writing and mathematics. As a result, teachers' expectations are higher. They are assessing pupils' work with more confidence and increasing accuracy and doing this more regularly. This is helping pupils who fall behind to catch up quickly.

The deputy headteacher took on the leadership of the pupil premium funding in October 2018. The school commissioned a review of the pupil premium in September 2018. The deputy headteacher has acted on the findings and analysed the barriers to disadvantaged pupils making progress in line with others nationally. However, the report on the use of pupil premium funding on the school's website does not follow government guidelines. There are no targets for disadvantaged pupils' progress or expectations of when any actions should happen. As a result, governors cannot challenge school leaders effectively about disadvantaged pupils' progress.

Since Easter 2019, the deputy headteacher has led developments in special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She has made sure that the registration of pupils with SEND is accurate and has provided the pupils with bespoke plans so that teachers and other adults understand the needs of these pupils. This is very recent, so it is not possible to measure any impact yet. The pastoral support worker oversees the most complex cases of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND and works effectively with external agencies to monitor their needs. This provides the deputy headteacher with the capacity to manage the improvement of the remaining pupils.

The school commissioned a review of governance in October 2018, but governors took too long to act upon it. Although governors have their own strategic plan for raising standards, it does not cover enough of the recommendations in the review and so there are still gaps in the fulfilment of their roles. The current governing body is small yet tenacious in seeking improvements. The members are showing a commitment to challenging and supporting leaders.

The English leader has maintained the standard of teaching in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). Children in Reception are now at the right stage of learning in their phonics, ready for Year 1.

The mathematics leader has changed the teaching in mathematics in recent weeks. Pupils are undertaking more reasoning and problem-solving tasks as a result and their work is more challenging. Both pupils and teachers are benefiting from these changes.

Neither the English nor mathematics leaders had any leadership training until two weeks ago. They have been involved in the formal monitoring of teaching in their subjects.

The school is due to close on 31 July 2019 and reopen on 1 August 2019 as an academy sponsored by DGAT. The deputy headteacher will become head of school,

supported by the deputy CEO of DGAT and DGAT school improvement lead.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

In September 2018, many teachers started in year groups with which they were unfamiliar. While teachers were making themselves aware of the expected curriculum, much valuable learning time was lost. In one year group, pupils were taught by four different teachers in the autumn term 2018, although this situation has now stabilised. The year group has had the same teacher since the beginning of the spring term 2019.

The effective and regular monitoring by you means that teachers are accountable for pupils' progress. You provide good support and challenge when teaching is weaker. However, there is still an over reliance by teachers on tasks which do not provide effective and sequenced learning, especially in the foundation subjects. As a result, pupils' progress is not as strong in these subjects as it should be.

Equally, teachers do not plan well enough for pupils with SEND beyond the support provided by teaching assistants. Although leaders know the barriers to disadvantaged pupils' progress, there has not been effective training for teachers on removing these barriers. Therefore, teachers deal with these pupils' needs inconsistently and there are no clear strategies regarding these pupils' learning that are different from planning for other pupils.

Teachers are clearer about what pupils should achieve in their learning in English and mathematics and explain this more carefully to pupils. Consequently, pupils understand the targets set and how to achieve them. When pupils do have misconceptions, the more effective teachers regularly check pupils' work so errors can be eradicated. Progress is more rapid as a result in most classes but there are still too many inconsistencies.

Most teachers have higher expectations of pupils' abilities and challenge a greater proportion of pupils to work at a higher standard. Pupils have responded well to this and focus more on their learning and do better work. The new strategies in mathematics teaching are particularly effective in stretching pupils' thinking.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils behave well in most lessons and low-level disruption is very rare. When teaching is weak, there is some disaffection from a few pupils which teachers do not always challenge.

There are some elements of inappropriate, boisterous behaviour at break and lunch time. Staff log these incidents, but leaders do not analyse the reasons for these incidents or look for trends or types of behaviour and their causes. As a result, the poor behaviour continues because pupils are not educated about why these things are wrong. It is a similar situation with bullying, though this is a far rarer occurrence

than the incidents of poor behaviour.

Most pupils take pride in their work, especially in their handwriting in English and topic work in key stage 2. Some pupils do not display the same pride in their work in mathematics. This weakness persists because pupils' work in mathematics is not checked sufficiently by teachers.

With the appointment of the pastoral support worker, the emotional needs of the most vulnerable pupils are being considered more effectively.

Pupils feel safe and know about the dangers of social media and how to keep safe online.

There is a well-managed breakfast and after-school club on site that provides pupils with a safe place to stay.

Outcomes for pupils

There are signs of improvement in mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 in the end-of-year tests in 2019, but in other subjects results have stayed the same. Pupils' attainment has improved in mathematics at key stage 2 by 16% and is above average now. Attainment in writing has improved by four per cent but is still below average. There has been no improvement in reading. At key stage 1, pupils' attainment has improved marginally in reading and writing but standards are still below average. Too few pupils are working at a higher standard, considering their starting points.

Year 1 pupils achieved in line with the national average in the phonics screening check in 2019 for the second year running.

Early Years Provision

Teaching in the Reception class has received continual support from the deputy headteacher throughout this year. As a result, the Reception teacher's expectations regarding children's behaviour are higher. Children are more engaged with their learning and attentive. Planning is developing but is far from satisfactory as teaching overall is poor and does not build well enough on children's prior learning.

Children learn phonics daily, so most children know the sounds expected by the end of Reception, which is an improvement on last year.

Although changes have been made to the layout of areas, inside and out, following advice given by the deputy headteacher, children's activities do not yet support effective learning. Too many children flit between activities and do not show sustained concentration.

There are significant weaknesses in assessing children's progress and in managing their learning. For example, adults' time is not used effectively and consequently

children are not assessed regularly. As a result, children make limited progress. The most able children are not stretched in their reading, writing and thinking.

External support

The local authority organised reviews on pupil premium and governance in the autumn term 2018 and seconded a deputy headteacher from a local school in the same term. A leadership group met monthly to monitor progress against the areas for improvement given at the inspection in July 2018. Despite this, there was little impact from the local authority's support in the autumn term 2018. When you arrived in post, your strong and experienced leadership galvanised most staff to seek rapid improvements in teaching and learning. There are some signs of change in expectations and standards as a result.

Current school leaders have checked safeguarding procedures and made sure they are fit for purpose. Subject leaders have received leadership training.