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Lisa Thompson
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Dear Mrs Thompson

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 October 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 November 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 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 Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve pupils' progress and thereby raise attainment in key stage 1, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - leaders' plans are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' outcomes
 - leaders and governors thoroughly evaluate the impact of their actions on school improvement
 - assessments of pupils' learning and progress are accurate
 - leaders monitor pupils' progress from their starting points so that they can identify when pupils are falling behind and act swiftly to help them to catch up
 - checks on teaching focus on how well pupils are learning and how much progress they are making
 - additional funding is used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - middle leaders receive further training to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning effectively
 - the curriculum is well planned and develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects
 - the designated safeguarding lead maintains an effective oversight of all safeguarding concerns and the actions taken.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in the early years, by:
 - planning learning that builds on what pupils know, understand and can do
 - making accurate assessments of pupils' learning and using these to plan work that matches pupils' abilities closely
 - providing work that is sufficiently challenging and deepens the understanding of the most able pupils
 - ensuring that support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is appropriately tailored to their needs
 - improving staff's subject knowledge so that they can ask questions that challenge pupils and deepen their understanding
 - developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
 - providing pupils with clear guidance on how to use and apply their writing skills so that they write with increasing complexity and depth.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 October 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive headteacher (IEHT) and other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with governors and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust that the school will be joining. The lead inspector also had a meeting with the senior improvement adviser from Wolverhampton local authority, also with the school improvement adviser from the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Parents and carers were spoken to on the playground at the end of school.

The inspector observed behaviour during social and lesson times. The inspector held formal and informal discussions with pupils. The inspector and the IEHT made short visits to a range of lessons in the early years and key stage 1. During these visits, the inspector looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to assess the quality of their learning.

Context

The substantive headteacher left the school in February 2019. An IEHT was appointed from St Andrews, a local successful primary school. There is an academy order in place and the school has plans to join the St Francis and St Clare Multi-Academy Company on or before the 1 January 2020.

There have been changes to teaching staff since the last inspection. Two members of teaching staff left the school. The school has employed a new early years foundation stage (EYFS) leader and another part-time teacher.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Staff within the school have been moved to different year groups which better suit their skills. There is ongoing support from St Andrew's school. Teachers have accessed professional development. As a result, the quality of education right from the early years at St Patrick's is improving. This is reflected in the test scores pupils achieved in 2019 at the end of key stage 1. Moderation by the local authority confirmed that assessments of pupils' learning are accurate.

Leaders' actions are beginning to have a demonstrable impact on the standard of pupils' work. Pupils now use a range of resources to support their learning. They are given challenges that extend their thinking. While these improvements are relatively recent, they show that the school is well placed to make further improvements to its curriculum and the quality of education it provides.

Reading is prioritised across the school. Phonics is taught daily and pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are encouraged to read every day. They use books that match the sounds they already know. Parents benefit from reading workshops that help them understand how they can help their child to develop a love of reading. For example, a pirate workshop involved parents making a model boat for one of the pirate characters in the story.

The designated safeguarding lead has a clear oversight of safeguarding concerns, and records are detailed and clear. Pupils say they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They learn about anti-bullying and fire safety, and understand how to use mobile phones and the internet responsibly. Pupils' behaviour in and around school is generally good.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about their school. They know it is important to understand and respect the beliefs of others. They enjoy a range of trips and visits including visits to museums and art galleries. Pupils are proud to represent their school when picked for sports teams.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Senior leadership has been strengthened since the last inspection.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are using this to inform effective actions towards the removal of special measures. The school's action plan details a range of strategies that are addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Relevant, clear and specific actions are set with realistic time frames. It is clear who will do what, and when.

The IEHT has high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Changes to the way the school approaches and uses assessment mean it is now more in line with other local schools. This enables comparisons of pupils' work to be made so that judgements continue to be accurate.

Leaders have prioritised improving reading, writing and mathematics. Alongside this, they have ensured that pupils access a wide range of subjects across the whole curriculum.

Leaders are using the pupil premium review that took place in September 2019 to improve their practice. Meeting disadvantaged pupils' needs now has a much higher profile in the school. This group of pupils access a wide range of effective support. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers closed significantly this year. The school continues to monitor how well these pupils continue to do.

Provision for pupils with SEND is improving. However, there are many actions on the school's audit of its provision that still need attention, such as analysing the impact

of the support provided to pupils. The SENCo will continue to need a high level of support to ensure that these key tasks are quickly carried out.

A new EYFS leader has been appointed from September 2019. The leader is experienced and understands the further improvements that are needed. The leader has already refreshed curriculum planning so that it meets the needs and interests of the children. She ensures that it builds on what pupils know, understand and can do.

In spring 2020, the school is preparing to join the St Francis and St Clare Multi-Academy Company when it converts to an academy. The CEO of the trust, although not yet responsible for the school, has a clear understanding of the developments needed for the school to improve.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The interim executive headteacher and the governing body work with a clear plan to address weaknesses. They work together to get the job done. They continue to review their actions. This ensures that there is continual improvement.
- The EYFS leader is already having an impact on the provision in the early years. The improvements being made are ensuring that children get off to a good start at the school.

External support

The school has been well supported by staff at St Andrew's, Wolverhampton local authority and the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. Staff at St Patrick's have developed their subject knowledge through working with these partners.