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28 October 2019

Miss Hilary Dunford  
St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary School  
Pennywell Road  
Bristol  
Avon  
BS5 0TJ

Dear Miss Dunford

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 October 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bristol. 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 October 2018.**

- Increase leadership capacity, including governance, by ensuring that:
  - performance management procedures are effective so that teachers know what actions they need to take to improve their teaching rapidly
  - governors hold school leaders fully to account for the school's performance and the progress of pupils
  - additional funds for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are used effectively to improve outcomes
  - the school's curriculum provides pupils with the skills and knowledge required to make the progress expected of them, ensuring that they achieve well
  - middle leaders are provided with further appropriate training to develop their skills in monitoring teaching and learning effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - there is an agreed approach to teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, which is consistent across the school, so that the proportion of pupils reaching age-related expectations is improved
  - teachers receive the appropriate training, support and effective monitoring needed to improve the quality of their teaching rapidly
  - teachers plan learning tasks that are matched to pupils' needs, including within the early years
  - leaders establish the new assessment system fully
  - teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning attitudes and behaviours so that disruption is reduced, enabling all pupils to make progress.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide activities that challenge the most able pupils sufficiently for them to make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics
  - there are opportunities for all pupils to apply what they know and can do in mathematics, through problem-solving and reasoning activities.

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

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 October 2019**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, senior leaders, staff, the chair of the management committee, a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Cabot Learning Federation. The inspector also spoke on the telephone with the director of education for the Clifton diocese.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been three changes of headteachers. A new headteacher took up her post at the start of this term.

The Cabot Learning Federation supports the school's improvement. It provides leaders to work with the school on aspects of leadership, safeguarding, behaviour and improving the quality of education.

The governing body stepped down in January 2019 following a governance review. An interim management committee is in place. There have been considerable staff changes since the previous section 5 inspection. All classes have a teacher in post from September.

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

School leaders, the local authority, the diocese and the management committee are working with determination to improve the school. However, the continual changes to the leadership and teaching staff over the past 12 months have hindered the rate of improvement. The school has not made enough progress to bring about the necessary changes so far.

Aspects of safeguarding, seen as a strength in the previous inspection, deteriorated last year. The management committee has prioritised safeguarding and ensured that all aspects are improved. However, there remain weaknesses in the quality of education.

The new headteacher has introduced a curriculum that covers all subjects. She has already made changes to the organisation and teaching of reading. This recent work is beginning to take hold, but it is too soon to see impact.

Leaders are aware that more work is needed to ensure that pupils gain the depth and breadth of knowledge they need to be well prepared for the next stage in their education. In the past, the curriculum for pupils in Year 6 has been narrowed to ensure that more pupils meet the expected standards for reading, writing and mathematics. However, weaknesses in the quality of education, across the school, mean that many current pupils have gaps in their knowledge across a range of subjects. Leaders' work to remedy this is in its infancy.

Leaders' work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well is not yet effective. The management committee commissioned a review of pupil premium funding. However, the recommendations of the review are not yet firmly in place. Leaders' work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively has not yet started.

Leaders' work to improve the leadership of SEND is beginning to build momentum. However, communications between staff and parents and carers are not good enough. Parents of pupils with SEND do not have enough opportunities to discuss the effectiveness of their child's provision or to give their views.

Leaders have implemented a new behaviour policy. Although most pupils behave well, there are some pupils who need a significant amount of adult support to manage their behaviour. When learning matches their interests and abilities, pupils work hard. However, this does not happen consistently across the school. As a result, some pupils' learning is disrupted.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school**

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have credible experience and capacity to bring about the much-needed improvement. Leaders have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's weaknesses. They understand the school's priorities. They are providing clear communication about what needs to be done and how.

However, their school improvement plan is still being developed. It does not include the areas for improvement described at the previous inspection. It does not describe in enough detail how leaders will check that agreed actions are making a difference to the quality of education pupils receive.

The headteacher has introduced clear guidance for staff on how reading, writing and mathematics is to be taught. However, curriculum leaders' roles are still at an early stage of development. Most curriculum leaders do not play a part in ensuring that their subjects are taught well across the school. They do not check that pupils are learning the curriculum and are therefore making progress.

Staff report that better communication and guidance from current school leaders about the consistent approaches to teaching and how to manage pupils' behaviour is already making a positive difference.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The new headteacher has given clarity to staff about what needs to improve and how to bring this about. She has prioritised securing clear guidance for staff on how to raise teaching expectations for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Members of the management committee and the diocese are drawing on their knowledge and experience to provide strong challenge and support to senior leaders. They are using their accurate and deep understanding of the school to ensure that the right actions are selected to move the school forward.

- The management committee has secured immediate improvements to safeguarding to ensure that pupils are safe.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Leaders have not yet tackled some of the most pressing issues for improvement. Leaders' work to improve the quality of education is still at its early stages.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that communication with parents, particularly parents of pupils with SEND, is effective.
- Leaders have been slow to respond to the recommendations of the pupil premium review.

### **External support**

The school has considerable external support and the need for this remains. The Clifton diocese, the management committee, the Cabot Learning Federation and Bristol local authority work together to provide joint oversight of the school's improvement. They have secured a new leadership team and recruited several new teachers. However, they are aware that the changes in leaders have meant that the school has made slow progress in improving the quality of education.

The Cabot Learning Federation provides staff to support school improvement. The changes in leadership have meant that much of this work has not embedded into practice in the school. However, their support to improve aspects of safeguarding has been effective.