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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Ian Rumbelow
St Mary and St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Copse Lane
Ilton
Ilminster
Somerset
TA19 9EX

Dear Mr Rumbelow

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Mary and St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 November 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 January 2019.

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 action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may 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 Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the

Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2019.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - 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 SEND are used effectively to improve outcomes
 - middle leaders are provided with appropriate training to develop their skills in monitoring teaching and learning effectively
 - teaching and learning improve rapidly by focusing clearly on promoting pupils’ progress and attainment, including in the early years.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers receive the appropriate training, support and monitoring needed to improve the quality of teaching rapidly
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers use accurate assessment to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils, so that their outcomes improve, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND
 - teachers have high expectations of pupils’ attitudes to learning, so that low-level disruption is reduced, enabling all pupils to sustain learning and make progress.
- Improve pupils’ outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide activities that challenge all pupils to apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar in writing across the curriculum
 - the teaching of mathematics enables pupils to apply what they know to problem-solving and reasoning
 - pupils use their phonics skills to develop their fluency of reading, including within the early years.
- Improve pupils’ attendance and reduce the level of persistent absence.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 05 November 2019

Evidence

The inspector carried out lesson visits to phonics and mathematics. He scrutinised pupils' writing and mathematics books and listened to pupils read to an adult. He also scrutinised leaders' priorities for improvement, governors' minutes and visit notes from external support. He met with the headteacher to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. He met with class teachers, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the chair of the governing body. He spoke with a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection in January 2019, there have been changes made to the leadership of the school. The current headteacher has been in post since April 2019. The school is currently awaiting confirmation to join an academy trust; this is due to happen in the coming months.

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

The headteacher, with support from external guidance, has changed the school's approach to teaching phonics. He decided this was necessary as he felt that staff training on the previous approach was lacking. Early signs show that this new approach is taking root. Pupils are more engaged and focused than previously. However, differences remain in how much staff expect from pupils. When pupils practise the new sound they are learning, adults do not check routinely on how well pupils are getting on.

Children in the reception class are now receiving a better start to their phonics. Already, they are on track for key milestones in the phonics programme. They are applying what they have learned to books that match the sounds they know. Leaders have invested in reading books for pupils. Staff have grouped these books together according to reading stage. However, teachers have grouped some books together less well, which results in pupils reading books which are either too easy or too challenging.

Leaders are also embarking on a new approach to teaching writing. Prior to this change, staff describe not being clear about what others were teaching, or how. The implementation of this approach has been less successful than that seen in reading. Teachers still do not have enough understanding about the intended writing approach. This affects how well they sequence lessons to help pupils build on their knowledge. This limits pupils' progress. Leaders are not yet certain whether curriculum plans for writing support pupils to build their knowledge in writing across the different types of fiction and non-fiction studied. This is because curriculum

plans for writing are still in their infancy. Teachers are beginning to talk with one another and are comparing the work in pupils' books; this a useful stepping stone to securing a more consistent whole-school approach.

Despite the remaining weaknesses in writing, leaders' decision to introduce a common approach across the school is a meaningful step. The headteacher has sought opportunities for teachers to work with other schools who follow the same writing approach. This should support the implementation of this writing approach going forward.

In mathematics, leaders have made it clearer how they want mathematics taught across the school. Over time, several different approaches had led to a confused whole-school approach. Some of these historic approaches remain. Pupils get plenty of opportunities to develop their sense of number and basic facts. However, opportunities to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving knowledge are too infrequent. Pupils' books show that, on occasions, they spend too little time practising new learning before they move on to something different. This means it is still hard for pupils who struggle to keep up, and they are ill-prepared for what comes next. Some pupils are moved on to future learning with misconceptions in place. This slows their progress further.

The SENCo has been in place for just over a year. Over time, she has not had the support or training to help her fulfil her role fully. Dutifully, she has ensured that teachers set targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and she regularly reviews these. However, the quality of the targets is still too variable. Targets are not precise enough consistently. This makes it difficult for teachers to provide meaningful activities to help pupils secure the progress they need.

Adults monitor children's progress in the reception class and capture this on an electronic system. Adults use photographs, alongside captions and narration, to describe what it is that children have achieved. However, the quality of this evidence is still too variable. When comparing adults' evidence about what children know, can do and understand with key milestones in the early years framework, it is not clear that the evidence meets the goals that adults think children have met.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils are focusing better in lessons, and low-level disruption now rarely occurs. Pupils engage in activities and are becoming increasingly confident to share their ideas with their peers. However, some still find this tricky. Staff are supporting pupils to develop their interpersonal skills so that they can hold more meaningful discussions with one another. Occasionally, pupils still depend too much on adults for support. This limits pupils' progress as they then find it difficult to work on their own. In books, pupils' presentation shows a steady improvement. Younger pupils occasionally struggle and write numbers back to front in mathematics. There is a risk that, unless tackled, this could become embedded.

Pupils' attendance remains weak. Pupils' absence and persistent absence are worse than national averages and show little sign of improvement. The headteacher acknowledges this is a priority and is working increasingly with families to bring about improvements. The proportion of pupils who miss school regularly has increased. This means that they are not making as much progress in their work as the pupils who do attend.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher quickly recognised the aspects of the school's performance which required urgent attention. Without delay, he established an action plan to secure improvements. He has worked closely with the governing body on agreeing planned actions. Together, they considered the findings from the previous inspection when determining improvement priorities.

The headteacher has prioritised consistency, in terms of teaching core subjects and how staff manage behaviour. His introduction of new approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics are at different stages of implementation. However, staff state that the headteacher is providing the necessary support and guidance to help them. The headteacher has checked teachers' work so he can support teachers' development and tackle any underperformance.

Staff are positive about the headteacher's work since he joined. They feel they are working together, rather than separately, to bring about improvements. They are focusing on ensuring that the way they teach subjects is consistent. They support the headteacher's vision and appreciate his efforts to not make too many changes too quickly. The headteacher has, purposefully, not attempted to change everything at once, recognising that it could be less effective and impact on staff workload and well-being.

Governors have an increasingly accurate view of the school's performance. They are now beginning to provide the headteacher with challenge and accountability, something that was lacking previously. Governors acknowledge that, over time, their roles had been too operational and lacked strategy. This is improving. The governing body are currently in transition as the school prepares to join an academy trust. They are working with the trust to decide which responsibilities they will have when they join.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- There is a clear determination to ensure greater consistency across the school. Although in its early stages, there is justification in this work.
- Children get off to a strong start in phonics. They are keeping up with the programme, and they access reading books that match the sounds they have

learned.

- Pupils' behaviour has improved rapidly. Low-level disruption is rare, and pupils are beginning to engage in meaningful discussions with one another.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Pupils' absence rates remain too high. Too many pupils miss school regularly.
- The approach to teaching mathematics is not yet consistent. Pupils do not access a mathematics curriculum which supports their reasoning and problem-solving knowledge.
- Teachers' knowledge of the school's intended writing approach is not strong. The school's writing curriculum is not yet in place.

External support

The school has had support to bring about improvements to the quality of education, including in the early years. While this support has been beneficial, it has not aligned closely enough with the findings identified at the previous inspection. This has limited the impact of support. The headteacher has looked to the academy trust they are joining for additional support. Staff are more positive about the impact of this support.