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Ms Rachel Colquhoun
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Lidgett Lane
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South Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Colquhoun

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

Following my visit to your school on 7–8 January 2020, 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 2019.

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 not fit for purpose.

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

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Hallam, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment and so improve outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to plan work that is neither too easy nor too difficult for pupils, including for pupils with SEND
 - by the end of key stage 1, pupils are taught to write legibly, spell more accurately and use appropriate basic punctuation
 - teaching assistants do not over support pupils and allow them to become confident, independent learners
 - pupils improve their vocabulary systematically as they get older
 - pupils learn essential key knowledge in mathematics, such as their times tables.
- Improve the teaching of phonics and early reading by:
 - promoting reading for pleasure in classrooms
 - listening to pupils reading aloud, particularly those who need additional support
 - improving the reading records so that pupils' next steps in learning are clear
 - providing opportunities for pupils to practise the new phonics sounds they have learned through reading and writing during the school day.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders thoroughly check the quality of teaching and support teachers to improve their skills
 - developing the curriculum so that pupils gain knowledge and skills beyond reading, writing and mathematics
 - ensuring that SEND documentation is clear and regularly updated, and that teachers have sufficient skills to address their needs in class.
- Urgently develop a strong culture of safeguarding by:
 - ensuring that when concerns are raised, actions immediately follow
 - following statutory government requirements when vetting new staff.
- Improve provision in the early years so children are fully prepared for the demands of Year 1 by:
 - providing children with opportunities to practise reading the new sounds they have learned in phonics

- improving the outdoor area so that it gives children varied, exciting activities for them to learn.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 7 January 2020 to 8 January 2020

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the acting assistant headteacher and the interim special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The inspector also met the safeguarding leader and the member of staff who maintains recruitment records.

The inspector met a group of three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. The inspector also met groups of staff and pupils.

Context

Following the last inspection, several governors resigned. New governors were appointed in October 2019. Several teachers, including senior leaders, have also left the school since the last inspection.

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

Leaders are not improving the school quickly enough. There has been some success in addressing two of the five areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. However, there has been little or no progress in three of the five areas, including leadership and management. The school is still relying heavily on external support.

Quality of education

There has been limited progress in improving the quality of education. Outcomes fell further in 2019 and they remain within the bottom 20% of all schools, as they have been for the last three years. The quality of the mathematics curriculum is poor. Some classes have had several different teachers. This has slowed pupils' progress. There is a legacy of weak mathematics leadership, and there is no mathematics subject leader now. Teachers' subject knowledge is not good enough in mathematics. The mathematics curriculum lacks ambition. Pupils are working below age-related expectations. Leaders check the mathematics curriculum, but they do not provide teachers with the sharply focused guidance they need to improve the mathematics curriculum quickly.

The executive headteacher's multi-academy trust released its SENCo to support the school before the last inspection. This arrangement is continuing until the school trains its own SENCo. The interim SENCo has checked to make sure that the right targets are set for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The SENCo checks to make sure that teachers are planning work that is appropriate for pupils with SEND. The SENCo and the local authority have trained teachers and teaching assistants to improve their skills. Pupils with SEND are getting the help that they need to help them learn.

In 2019, only 20% of pupils passed the phonics screening check in Year 1. This meant that only four out of 20 Year 1 pupils had learned to read as well as they should for their age. Leaders had begun to improve the teaching of early reading and phonics before the last inspection. Pupils have been following the new phonics programme for longer now and it is working. Teachers and teaching assistants follow the school's phonics scheme consistently. New reading books are well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge. Pupils enjoy reading more now. Pupils in Year 2 are catching up quickly.

Children in Reception are not doing as well. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for children to practise their early reading and mathematical skills as they play in the outdoor learning environment. Children are not getting off to a good start in early years. Leaders have invited a specialist leader of education to come and help staff improve the learning environment so that children can learn more when they are playing.

Safeguarding

Leaders have improved safeguarding arrangements since the last inspection. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders follow vetting procedures fully when they recruit staff. They make sure that all the necessary checks are made to make sure that staff are suitable to work with children. Leaders have designed a declaration form for each candidate so that leaders can check whether staff have worked overseas. They know how to check police records in other countries.

The safeguarding policy published on the school's website is out of date. However, the old policy does include telephone numbers that parents and carers could use to raise concerns about pupils' safety.

The executive headteacher took over the role of safeguarding leader personally following the last inspection. All staff have been trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Leaders act quickly when staff report safeguarding concerns. Leaders have strong professional relationships with the early help team in children's social care. They refer pupils promptly to make sure that pupils get the extra help that they need as soon as possible.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There has been limited progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in leadership and management. The diocese recognises that the umbrella trust is not

helping the school. Each school within the trust works independently as separate, single schools.

The executive headteacher began leading the school in January 2019. Governors, staff, pupils and parents say that the school has improved under her leadership, particularly pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Staff say that the executive headteacher has built their morale up from a very low starting point.

The previous inspection report noted strengths in the new governing body. However, following the inspection, several governors resigned. Six new governors were appointed in October 2019. Although the inspection team identified lapses in meeting statutory requirements in July 2019, governors did not rectify this. Governors are still not meeting their statutory duties. Leaders know that the website is not compliant with statutory requirements.

Governors are not yet fulfilling their role in overseeing school improvement. When a school goes into special measures, governors should provide a statement of action within 10 days of the publication of the inspection report. Governors did not fulfil their duty to provide this. Governors are obliged to inform registered parents of the actions proposed within the statement of action and take parents' views into account. There is no record of this consultation. Ofsted repeated the request for a statement of action and the executive headteacher provided this on 19 December 2019. The statement of action was evaluated on 2 January 2020 as not fit for purpose. A revised version was presented for evaluation during this inspection. It remains unfit for purpose.

The statement of action is unwieldy. It is not strategic, and includes unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved in 2019/20. Too little consideration is given to which actions can reasonably be deferred. Some priorities are not linked to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection, when these should be the key priorities for urgent attention. The plan is not clear enough about who is doing what, and how governors will hold leaders to account. The plan has not been linked to the school's budget, so resource implications have not been properly considered.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The executive headteacher is accurate in her evaluation of the quality of education.
- The executive headteacher is open and direct in the information that she provides for the governing body.
- Teachers appreciate the professional development that is provided now. They say that leaders' expectations of their workload are reasonable.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Some appointments that were made in September 2019 have been unsuccessful, leading to continuing vacancies within the senior and middle leadership teams. This is slowing the rate of sustainable improvement to the curriculum.
- The school remains over-reliant on external support.
- The high turnover in teaching staff has been a limiting factor in improving the quality of education and the rate of pupils' progress.

External support

The executive headteacher's multi-academy trust is providing effective support by sharing its staff. The executive headteacher is in school for three and a half days and the deputy headteacher/SENCo is in school for one day each week. The diocese formalised a three-year partnership agreement with the multi-academy trust in December 2019. This provides some stability and continuity during the school's improvement journey.

The diocese brokered external support from the English hub that is part of another multi-academy trust within the diocese. The English hub has provided training for staff on the teaching of phonics and early reading. A phonics consultant provides ongoing training and guidance. Additional funding enabled leaders to provide new reading books that are matched to the phonics scheme. The English hub has provided effective support that is improving the quality of the teaching of early reading and phonics. This is helping more Year 1 and Year 2 pupils learn to read as well as they should for their age.

The local authority has provided effective support despite the school's academy status. The level of local authority support has gone above and beyond the hours that were commissioned by the school. The local authority has provided a national leader of education and several specialist leaders of education. The local authority specialist teaching team has provided training for staff from the autism communication team and the social, emotional and mental health outreach team. This has improved staff skills when teaching pupils with SEND. The local authority has agreed to support governors with the forthcoming recruitment process to appoint senior staff.