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Mrs Jayne McQuillan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McQuillan

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

Following my visit with Sharon Bray, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 May 2016, 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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 school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2015.

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the early years provision, so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - directing teachers to use their information about pupils' achievements more precisely to plan work that is suitably challenging for the most able pupils as well as provide a more consistent level of support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - making sure that teachers check more closely on pupils' understanding during lessons, thereby moving learning forward more quickly for those who are doing well and providing more structured support to those who are finding the work difficult
 - checking teachers' marking provides clear guidance to all pupils so they can quickly make necessary improvements to their work
 - developing adults' skills in the teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds)
 - ensuring that teachers place an increased focus upon the teaching of English grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - improving the accuracy of assessment in each area of learning in the early years to enable suitable activities to be planned for children to move their learning forward more quickly
 - making sure that children have enough suitable opportunities to learn outdoors as well as indoors in the early years.

- Raise pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing pupils with more activities to enable them to develop their skills in problem solving and their ability to reason
 - making sure that handwriting is taught more systematically across the school and that teachers raise their expectations of the quality of pupils' presentation of their work
 - raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils by making better use of the pupil premium funding

- accelerating boys' progress so that it is similar to that made by girls across the school
 - ensuring that all pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning during lessons through listening carefully to teachers' presentation of learning and introductions and that a closer eye is kept on their work rate.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
- introducing routine checks so that governors and senior leaders track the progress of the different prior attaining groups of pupils so that underachievement can be identified and appropriate actions taken to secure good progress
 - drawing together more sharply information about the quality of teaching across the school, including in the early years, to provide staff with clear guidance on how to improve, and ensuring that this is followed up with regular and detailed feedback
 - providing staff with clear guidance on how to use information from their assessments to inform their teaching
 - ensuring that subject leaders are more closely involved in checking on teaching in their areas of responsibility and in driving and securing improvement to provision and outcomes
 - ensuring governors check more closely on the extent to which leaders' actions are having a positive impact on pupils' achievements
 - making sure that the systems for the performance management of all staff are robust and that the policy is followed in relation to rewarding teachers.

External reviews of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10–11 May 2016.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and acting assistant headteacher, a group of pupils and four representatives of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a senior local authority officer. Inspectors observed teaching in all classes and looked at work in pupils' books. An inspector spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day. A range of documentation was reviewed. This included the school's development plan, the records of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning, records of the local authority officers' visits to the school and the school's most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the assistant headteacher has tendered her resignation with effect from 31 May 2016. An acting assistant headteacher has been appointed. One teacher has left the school and a permanent appointment has been made. Another teacher is resigning her classroom post with effect from 31 May 2016 but will continue to work in the school as a support teacher for intervention work. This class will be covered by a temporary appointment until the end of term. The early years teacher is on long-term sickness absence and has tendered her resignation with effect from 31 May 2016. This class is currently being covered by two seconded local authority early years lead teachers on a job share basis.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders' more regular and rigorous checks in lessons and around the school are bringing about rapid improvements in teaching and learning. The recently appointed acting assistant headteacher has established herself quickly and is providing strong support to the headteacher. Senior leaders have clarified expectations with all staff and, as a result, everyone knows and understands what needs to change. Senior leaders have introduced highly effective systems to monitor teaching and learning. This is ensuring that teachers receive tailored support in order to improve further. Most teachers are responsive to the feedback and guidance they receive. Processes for target setting and checking pupils' progress are becoming embedded across the school. As a result, leaders are holding teachers more rigorously to account for the progress that pupils are making.

Subject leaders' skills remain underdeveloped. Senior leaders recognise that the responsibility for improving teaching and learning is not widely enough distributed across subject leadership. The role of subject leaders needs to be developed further to enable the school to make more rapid progress and to ensure that all leaders are successfully fulfilling their roles.

Following the review of the management of the pupil premium, an action plan has been devised. Leaders are using the assessment information about these pupils to identify the areas of greatest need and target funding appropriately. As a result, although attainment gaps still exist, evidence from the monitoring of pupils' performance indicates that these pupils are making better progress and gaps are beginning to close.

Governors are clearly focused on school improvement. Since the last monitoring inspection, governors have acted swiftly to ensure that they hold leaders to account more rigorously in order to influence school improvement. They have a detailed understanding of the school through their regular visits and meetings, individual governor/class links and through the better-quality information provided by senior leaders.

Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and meet current requirements.

The diocese is in discussion with school leaders, including governors, about the school's move to academy status. The proposed conversion date is 1 September 2016.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Lesson observations during this inspection indicate that there have been many improvements in the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils are beginning to make better progress. All teachers demonstrate a willingness and determination to improve and are clearer about what they need to do to be more effective. This is because of well-planned professional development opportunities provided by local authority consultants and advisers, coaching and mentoring delivered by the acting assistant headteacher and helpful visits to other schools.

At its best, teaching is exciting, precise and unambiguous because teachers have high expectations and share the intended learning clearly with pupils. Any misconceptions are addressed immediately, ensuring that no time is wasted. Teachers keep a close eye on how well pupils are learning during a lesson in order to provide additional support, or add challenge, as required. As a result, pupils' rate of progress is more rapid. For example, in Year 2, pupils were enthralled to find Burglar Bill stealing adverbs and adjectives to help them make rapid progress with their writing. In Year 1, pupils were confidently using time conjunctions in their writing as they recounted their experience of discovering that the naughty bus had caused havoc in their classroom earlier in the week.

In most classes, teachers are reviewing pupils' work in line with the school's marking policy. In English, teachers are becoming more skilled at assessing pupils' writing and giving them clearer instructions about how they can improve their work.

However, in mathematics, pupils are rarely given clear ideas about how to improve their work or asked more challenging questions if they have made good progress with a particular task. As a result, feedback in mathematics does not support learning as effectively as in English.

The teaching of phonics has improved due to additional training for all staff. The effective use of intervention groups is supporting any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. As a result, the school's most recent monitoring indicates that pupils are achieving better with their phonics skills. A greater focus and raised awareness of addressing grammar, punctuation and spelling is evident in pupils' writing. The presentation of pupils' work is also improving and most books are neat, tidy and well organised.

In most lessons, teachers are supported by teaching assistants. They have positive relationships with pupils and act as good role models. However, they are not always well deployed to support pupils in their learning and development and, consequently, the impact of their work is not always clear.

Since the last monitoring inspection, the quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly in the early years. Teachers are now skilfully assessing what the children can already do and planning focused activities to address any gaps in their learning. Children are enjoying a wide range of purposeful tasks which are based on their interests and helping them to develop their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. For example, some children were fascinated by observing the class chicks and completing written records of their observations. Others were excited to be making 'dragon stew' and recording the ingredients and method on their recipe sheets. The classroom and outdoor area have been tidied, reorganised and improved, with many new resources. As a result, they are now vibrant learning environments. Children are rapidly becoming mature and independent learners who love to explore, investigate and share their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Where teaching is improving, pupils are becoming more enthusiastic learners who are developing confidence in themselves and are keen to do well. However, where teaching remains weaker, pupils' behaviour and attitudes understandably deteriorate because they are not sufficiently engaged in their learning.

Around the school pupils are polite, friendly and respectful. They say that they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their regular attendance. Pupils report that they enjoy good friendships because there is little intimidating behaviour and they feel safe at school. Pupils are developing a sense of pride in their school and understand that they have an important part to play in the school's development. Pupils demonstrate a mature and responsible approach to school life through their good conduct and actions.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the proportion of pupils working at the levels expected in reading, writing and mathematics has risen. However, there is still some variation in the quality of work and the progress made by pupils depending on which class they are in, particularly in key stage 2. The accuracy of judgements about the level of pupils' work has improved. Local authority officers, as well as a senior leader from another local school, have worked alongside school leaders to check teachers' judgements about work throughout the school. These are now much more accurate.

The school's information about children's achievement in the early years suggests that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development this year will be in line with the 2015 national average. This represents a significant improvement from the previous year. This is as a result of the good-quality teaching and support which they are now receiving. Children are being much better prepared for their transition to Year 1.

The school's information about pupils' performance suggests that pupils' performance in the Year 1 phonics screening check will exceed last year's score and will be in line with last year's national average. Similarly, this year's key stage 1 performance is predicted to improve slightly on last year's. The school's information about the achievement of pupils in key stage 2 is less optimistic. The school has provided a significant amount of targeted support to enable Year 6 pupils to reach their predicted levels. However, senior leaders recognise that many of these pupils have not been able to make up all of the lost ground in their learning as a result of poor-quality teaching in the past.

External support

The Diocese acted swiftly to address concerns about leadership reported at the last monitoring inspection. Appropriate support and development for leaders has ensured that the school is now making better progress. The local authority senior adviser holds regular review meetings with school leaders and governors. As a result, she has a clear and well-informed picture of the school's progress. The local authority has responded decisively to the urgent needs in the early years through sourcing high-quality teachers. The local authority is committed to supporting the school through its transition to academy status.