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Mrs Louise Bird
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bird

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 November 2018, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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.

Having considered all the evidence I 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 standards officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds (RC), the regional schools commissioner, and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2017.

- Improve the capacity of leadership and management to bring about improvement by:
 - recruiting a senior leader to ensure that improvements are not solely dependent on the interim consultant headteacher
 - securing the stability and quality of teaching in Year 6
 - ensuring that new middle leaders contribute to rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and the progress and attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2 by:
 - establishing consistent approaches to teaching the curriculum in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling and handwriting across the school
 - establishing a consistent approach to planning sequences of learning
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge and the precision with which they communicate what pupils should learn about the subject
 - improving the use of learning resources to support pupils' learning
 - establishing a common and consistent school policy for marking and feedback.
- Improve the use and impact of assessment by:
 - making effective use of assessment information to tackle gaps in pupils' knowledge
 - accurately matching tasks to pupils' learning needs
 - making sure that the most able pupils are set challenging tasks
 - intervening effectively to accelerate the progress of pupils who have fallen behind.
- Reduce persistent absence by limiting the frequency that parents take children on term-time holidays.
- In the early years, ensure that the development of boys at least matches the development of boys nationally by the end of Reception.

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 second monitoring inspection on 28 November 2018 to 29 November 2018

Evidence

The inspection was carried out by one inspector over two days. The inspector and headteacher, together, briefly visited all classrooms to observe teaching and learning. Senior and middle leaders scrutinised a range of pupils' workbooks with the inspector. Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the learning mentor and a higher-level teaching assistant. The inspector also held discussions with members of the trust intervention board, including three trustees, the trust standards officer, and a local authority school improvement adviser. A range of documents, including minutes of trust intervention board meetings, headteacher reports and leaders' monitoring notes, were examined. The inspector observed pupils at play and informally chatted with pupils. The inspector had brief discussions with several parents and considered the written responses of a number of parents.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, in July 2018, the position of deputy headteacher has been replaced by that of assistant headteacher. This position has very recently been filled by one of the effective middle leaders already at the school. A teacher who joined the school in July has left. Several supply teachers have been deployed to teach in lower key stage 2 to cover a long-term sickness and the position of the teacher who left. A teacher who is on maternity leave is being covered by a temporary teacher in Reception until the summer.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The stabilised staffing reported at the first monitoring inspection did not last more than a few weeks. School and trust leaders have not managed to appoint suitable teachers in lower key stage 2 to replace those who have either left at short notice or are absent. Nevertheless, the headteacher continues to unfalteringly lead an otherwise committed staff whose morale remains positive. This is despite the many demands on the headteacher's time, which occasionally draw her away from school improvement priorities.

This instability in teaching staff is the main barrier to improvement. The headteacher and trust have an achievable plan in place to address the issue. It is imperative that any action leaders take ensures that all pupils receive consistently effective teaching of an age-appropriate curriculum.

The headteacher has continued to act quickly and assertively to address any weak teaching. Senior and middle leaders have kept pace with the planned programme of checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders regularly visit

classrooms and are alert to what needs to improve. There is scope to make some of these checks less onerous and more developmental.

The effective mathematics and English leaders are bringing about greater consistency in the agreed, successful approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics. However, the disruptions to teaching in lower key stage 2 means that these strategies have not been consistently applied. Actions have not had the positive impact in these year groups that they have had in upper key stage 2 and in key stage 1.

Because the school is small, there is a limited number of staff to take on leadership responsibility. This is exacerbated by the temporary staffing. Physical education leadership is effective. Two other middle subject leaders have subject responsibility for humanities and art. However, not all subjects are currently being led, notably science and computing. The shortage of leaders means that progress in securing consistency of the quality of teaching across a wide range of subjects is hampered.

Leaders continue to hold regular meetings with teachers to identify pupils' needs. They agree specific interventions for individuals and groups of pupils. The effect of these interventions is only measurable in broad, not specific, terms. This is because leaders do not identify precisely what pupils will learn. The most effective teachers automatically do this for themselves. Less effective teachers would benefit from being held to account for precisely what pupils will learn and by when.

Leaders have been working to hone their action plans. The early years action plan identifies the right general priorities but is insufficiently sharp in its stated intended outcomes.

The trust intervention board helps to manage the tight budget and checks to make sure safeguarding arrangements remain secure. Board members understand the most important priorities. However, board minutes still do not give an accurate account of how, as governors assert, they challenge and support school leaders. The trust intervention board needs to shine a brighter light on the specific impact of each action leaders take. The board has not managed to help resolve the staffing issues.

The trust intervention board arranged an external review of the use of the pupil premium. The review concludes that leaders have in place potentially effective systems and processes to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. The inspector concurs with this view. The positive actions of leaders now need to be manifest in more consistently good quality teaching and a more rapid diminishing of the differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The already effective teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in upper key stage 2 and in Year 2 has further improved. Teachers are particularly effective at identifying precisely what individual pupils do not know. They ensure that pupils are taught any missing or patchy knowledge. Effective teaching in these classes is increasingly meeting the needs of all pupils well, including the disadvantaged and the most able. Teaching in Year 1 is effective. Year 1 pupils are generally making good progress. However, Year 1 pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid as it might be.

In contrast, because of the instability in Year 3 and in Year 4, teaching has led to variable rates of progress. Teaching in these year groups is generally not helping pupils who have fallen behind to catch up.

The direct teaching of small groups of children in the early years is more effective than the activities these children access independently. Adults' provision and arrangement of resources do not often enough fully secure and sustain the interest of children, especially boys. Boys are not developing the characteristics of effective learning that will ready them for learning in Year 1. Adults are still not always aware when children are not absorbed in their activities and challenged. When adults intervene in children's activities, the quality of learning generally tends to improve. The quality of adults' interactions with children is variable. Sometimes, adults are effective in getting children to talk at greater length. However, adults do not always help children answer fully or to develop the skill of speaking in complete sentences.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The recurring instabilities in staffing in lower key stage 2 have, as at the time of the inspection last December, had an unsettling effect on a few of the most vulnerable pupils. This is a backward step from the positive picture in July. The behaviour of pupils observed during the inspection was, in the main, impeccable. However, this was not the case in one class covered by a supply teacher during the inspection. Leaders have taken effective action to assess the individual social and emotional needs of pupils throughout the school. Furthermore, the presence of trusted teaching assistants compensates, to some degree, as do the regular nurturing programmes.

Attendance continues to improve, as do rates of persistent absence. The latest attendance and persistent absence figures for disadvantaged pupils are better than for all pupils. This is because of the consistently effective pastoral support for pupils and families.

Leaders continue to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. For example, the record of safer recruitment checks on adults is accurate and complete and child protection records are meticulous.

During the inspection, a very small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying. The overwhelming majority of those parents surveyed during the inspection felt leaders dealt well with bullying. The inspector will check this aspect of pupils' safety at the next monitoring inspection in the spring term.

Outcomes for pupils

The progress of last year's leavers, over their time in key stage 2, was better than it was for the previous Year 6 leavers, especially in reading. Progress in mathematics was in the bottom 10% in 2017 but improved in 2018 to broadly average. Final assessments confirm that attainment by the end of key stage 1, which was broadly average in 2017, dipped substantially in 2018 due to the previous disruptions to teaching in key stage 1.

When the school was placed in special measures, the progress of pupils across key stage 2 was inadequate. Progress had begun to improve by the time of the first monitoring inspection. School data, and the work in pupils' books, suggest that in the majority of year groups, most pupils are working at an age-appropriate standard. Too many pupils in Year 4 continue to work at a standard below that of which they ought to be capable.

The proportion of pupils working at an above average standard is growing as teaching challenges them better. This varies by year group and subject. The differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils, especially disadvantaged boys, and other pupils, both nationally and in the school, remain. In classes where teaching is effective, disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved. Girls are outperforming boys, especially disadvantaged boys, in all year groups.

All pupils in all year groups are developing knowledge in all subjects. This is because the curriculum is broad and balanced, and leaders have given some thought to what they want pupils to learn in each subject. However, progress across a wide range of subjects, and across the age range, is far too variable. This is because, over time, pupils' acquisition of knowledge has not been systematic and cumulative. In addition, the degree to which teachers have upheld high standards has varied too much. Some teachers are not giving enough consideration to the best ways of teaching some subjects, such as history and geography. For example, the inappropriate use of worksheets is often making insufficient demands on pupils.

External support

The local authority school improvement adviser, commissioned by the trust to provide additional support and challenge, knows the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. She continues to offer considerable challenge. She enhances the accountability of both school leaders and members of the trust intervention board, including trustees.