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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 11–12 July 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 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 December 2017.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer or equivalent 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 first monitoring inspection on 11 July 2018 to 12 July 2018

Evidence

The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and all members of the teaching staff present during the inspection. He met with a representative of the Bishop Konstant Catholic Academy Trust, five members of the trust intervention board (TIB), and the local authority school improvement adviser commissioned by the trust to provide challenge and support. With the headteacher, the inspector briefly observed teaching and learning in all classes. The inspector scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks with the leadership team. Documents were scrutinised, including the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring notes, a sample of TIB minutes and pupils' assessment information. The inspector listened to what a selection of pupils and parents had to say about the school's improvements.

Context

Since the last inspection, the trust has appointed a permanent headteacher. The interim consultant headteacher, in post at the time of the last inspection, has been appointed as the trust standards officer. A key stage 1 leader, an early years leader, a teacher and a teaching assistant have been appointed to replace staff who have left the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The trust appointed the current headteacher, on a temporary basis, in February 2018, to replace the outgoing interim headteacher. The current headteacher, having proved her effectiveness, has now been appointed to lead the school permanently. Initially, the headteacher assumed responsibility for teaching the Year 6 class each morning. In the short term, this meant the headteacher could not devote all her time and energy to improving the school. Since May, the headteacher has been able to give her full attention to the most important priorities, quickening the rate of improvement.

The trust and the headteacher have largely stabilised the unsatisfactory, temporary staffing situation that had led to the decline in pupils' progress. All the current staff are employed on a permanent basis. Pupils and parents value this stability that is having a positive effect on pupils' well-being and progress.

Morale among the staff is much improved. The headteacher has secured the enthusiasm and commitment of all staff to further improve the school. Teachers value the clear messages from the headteacher about what is expected of them. Leaders are appropriately concentrating their energies on helping teachers to make more effective use of assessment information to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities. This is resulting in most pupils beginning to make stronger progress.

The headteacher has introduced some essential systems and processes that were not previously in place. For example, regular discussions between leaders and teachers are helping teachers to identify, more effectively, what needs to be done to bring about stronger progress for individual pupils. There is scope for further sharpening these discussions by identifying more clearly what pupils now know and what they need to learn next. Nevertheless, leaders are keeping a close eye on the progress of key groups and individuals. They are checking the quality of teaching. The headteacher challenges teaching that is less than effective.

The new key stage 1 leader, who is also the leader for mathematics, is already beginning to improve the quality of mathematics teaching. Under the guidance of the headteacher, the mathematics leader is helping to develop the leadership skills of the inexperienced leader of English, who is also beginning to make a positive contribution to improvements in teaching. These leaders are carrying out essential improvement work in the absence of the deputy headteacher.

The headteacher has begun to share out leadership responsibilities among the wider staff team. This work is early in its development; there is room for further developing leadership capacity.

The trust statement of action, which also suitably serves as the school improvement plan, is fit for purpose. It is particularly robust in terms of the appropriateness and pace of identified actions. The plan would benefit from some further sharpening. Targets identify what will be accomplished and by when, so leaders and TIB members can keep an eye on progress. However, targets do not shine the bright light on the intended impact of these actions on pupils' learning and progress that would help leaders and TIB members to be even more effective.

Members of the TIB, who are responsible for governing the school, are suitably experienced and qualified. They know the school well. They test out the assertions of school leaders by visiting the school and checking for themselves. They know exactly what needs to happen before the school can be judged good. However, TIB documents do not accurately reflect the way in which governors challenge leaders.

The external review of the spending of the pupil premium that was recommended at the last inspection has not yet taken place. Nevertheless, the headteacher has reviewed provision for each of the qualifying pupils. She has drafted a plan that is responsive to the identified barriers to learning and the needs of pupils. It is too early to assess the impact of this work. The trust has commissioned an external pupil premium review for the autumn term.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The improved stability in staffing, the support and challenge from partner schools, and clear guidance for teachers, are resulting in improvements in the quality of teaching.

Pupils in key stage 2 say they appreciate having a permanent teacher because the teacher gets to know pupils' individual abilities. Indeed, teachers are largely making better use of assessment information to match work to pupils' abilities. Teachers have raised expectations of what pupils ought to be able to achieve. This is not entirely consistent, however. The degree of challenge for the most able pupils, although improving, varies. Similarly, the quality of support for those who need to catch up is variable. There is some variability in the precision with which teachers help pupils to see exactly what is expected of them by the end of each lesson.

Leaders are beginning to establish more consistent approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are planning more effective sequences of learning. Pupils have more opportunities to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics and to attempt to solve challenging mathematical problems.

Some teaching is especially strong. The teaching of the headteacher, in the latter few months, has helped Year 6 pupils to do better in their end of year tests than they might otherwise have done. The teaching in Year 2 has recently helped pupils to make more rapid progress than they did in the first half of the year. The progress of pupils is improving in all classes.

In the early years, adults have plans in place to improve the achievement of boys. However, the activities which boys choose to do are not sufficiently demanding. Adults do not often enough notice when boys are not productively engaged. This limits the potential for more boys to reach a good level of development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Conditions are much improved for those pupils whose well-being was negatively affected by the discontinuity of teaching staff. The welcome stability in staffing is making a strong contribution to these pupils feeling more settled. External, professional support for individual pupils has had a positive effect on their well-being.

The rate of persistent absence has halved this year and is currently below the 2017 national average for all pupils. This is primarily due to the effective work of the learning mentor and the tougher stance on families taking holidays in term time. Pupils are enthusiastic about receiving attendance certificates and the weekly competition for the class attendance award. The overall attendance rate has not changed, remaining just a little below the 2017 national average.

Outcomes for pupils

The proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined has risen this year, though it is still below the 2017 national average. The rise is mainly due to an improvement in mathematics outcomes, which, last year, were especially weak. A few pupils who were falling

behind because of previous weaker teaching did not catch up. The proportion of the most able Year 6 pupils reaching higher standards has risen this year.

Conversely, Year 2 outcomes have slumped this year. This is because of instability and variability in the quality of teaching over time. More recent raised expectations mean Year 2 pupils are beginning to make rapid progress. It is imperative that those pupils who have fallen behind are helped to quickly catch up as they enter key stage 2.

Generally, most pupils currently in the school have begun to make stronger progress. Leaders are redoubling their efforts to help the least able pupils across the school to make more rapid progress, so that more of them begin to reach age-appropriate standards. Too many boys, next year, will enter Year 1 needing to catch up in reading, writing and mathematics.

There remains a marked difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.

External support

The trust standards officer, who is also a member of the TIB, is keeping a close eye on the school. Along with school leaders and other members of the TIB, she is ambitious for improvement to advance at a rapid rate.

The school to school support, provided by two trust schools, is valued by teachers. This support is helping teachers to raise their expectations of what pupils ought to be able to achieve. Partner teachers are working together to check teachers' assessments to make sure teachers have an accurate view of where pupils are in their development.

A local authority improvement adviser, commissioned by the trust to work with the school and other trust schools, is providing additional, effective challenge and support. For example, she has carried out a review of teaching and learning, helping to identify where further improvements can be made. She has supported the leader of English to develop her skills.

The trust and local authority have funded essential refurbishment of the building and grounds. Pupils and staff value the much-improved learning environment. The surroundings are quieter, and more conducive to learning and well-being.