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13 March 2015

Miss A Charity

Head of School

Elsecar Holy Trinity Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary

Church Street

Elsecar

Barnsley

South Yorkshire

S74 8HS

Dear Miss Charity

Special measures monitoring inspection of Elsecar Holy Trinity Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit with Joan Hewitt, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 March 2015, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. 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:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and the Director of Children's Services for Barnsley.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Improve teaching across the school, so all is at least good and all groups of pupils make good progress by ensuring that:
 - pupils do not spend unnecessary time working through easier work before moving on to more challenging activities
 - teachers question pupils to explore their understanding of what they are learning and to share their ideas with others
 - teachers use assessment information to make sure that pupils are set work at the right level and they have high expectations of what pupils of every ability can achieve
 - teachers' expectations of how pupils present their work are raised
 - teachers' marking, particularly in mathematics, identifies clearly what pupils need to do to improve their work and that teachers make sure that pupils respond well to this guidance.

- Raise pupils' attainment in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics and reading in Key Stage 2, so that more pupils reach and exceed the nationally expected levels, by ensuring that:
 - all pupils, but especially the most able show they can use their calculation skills to solve word problems in mathematics
 - pupils use their mathematical skills more widely across a range of subjects
 - there is a stronger focus on improving reading, by providing opportunities for pupils to read more widely and especially to adults.

- Urgently improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - the senior leadership team is strengthened to provide continuity of leadership on a day-to-day basis and more assistance to the executive headteacher so that the capacity of the school is increased to urgently bring about the necessary improvements
 - all staff with subject leadership responsibility gain the skills they need to monitor achievement and drive improvement
 - the provision for sport is developed through effective use of the primary physical education and sports funding so that it has greater impact on the development of healthy lifestyles.

An external review of governance is undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, groups of staff and pupils, members of the interim executive board (IEB) and representatives from the diocese and the local authority.

Context

A new head of school took up post in January 2015 and a teaching assistant joined the school. There are plans for the school to become an academy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Overall pupils' achievement continues to improve. The school's data show pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach levels of attainment in line with national averages. In Year 6 pupils' skills in writing have improved more rapidly than in mathematics. Most able pupils' progress lags behind that of others.

In Key Stage 2 pupils have maintained the neat presentation noted in the last monitoring letter. Pupils say they enjoy using calculation skills to solve real-life mathematics problems. However, there is no evidence pupils are using their mathematics skills across a range of subjects.

The remodelling of the early years and Year 1 provision is beginning to impact on children's progress. However, the records kept about children's learning are not detailed enough. Records of observations of children's work are infrequent and are not used systematically to plan the next steps in their learning. As a result, the school's assessment of children's progress is unreliable in the early years.

Pupils' reading is being promoted well. There has been considerable investment in new reading books. This is helping teachers to match the difficulty of the reading books to the ability of the pupils more effectively. School leaders have recently implemented a new programme to support the development of reading and writing. It is too soon to measure the impact of this programme.

The progress of the small number of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium is generally good, although it varies between classes. Teachers know these pupils well and plan extra help to improve their reading and writing skills. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is improving as a result of better support.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving, particularly in some Key Stage 2 classes. The new head of school has set high expectations and is providing a role model for effective teaching and learning. The one-to-one support for teachers, provided by the head of school, has had a significant impact on the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics. Comprehensive records are held about the quality of teaching and pupil progress in each class. The records are based on reviews of pupils' work, teacher's planning and lesson observation. The records provide leaders with a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching. As a result, key actions for improvement are provided to individual teachers, supported by helpful training.

Teachers are becoming more consistent in planning work to match the needs of pupils of different abilities. Consequently, pupils are spending less time doing work which is too easy for them. However, the most able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Teachers and teaching assistants are beginning to ask questions to explore pupils' understanding, but these are not always probing enough to ensure rapid progress.

Marking and feedback have improved. Marking is regular and pupils are provided with next steps in the feedback. In Key Stage 2, pupils have time to respond to the teacher's feedback and as a result, they are making better progress. However, pupils' response to feedback is not consistent across the school.

The learning environment has been considerably improved. The 'real life maths' displays show pupils well how mathematics is used in their everyday lives. Pupils are beginning to use the excellent classroom displays as a learning resource. The indoor and outdoor learning environments for the early years and Year 1 are more thoughtfully arranged and provide some more exciting resources.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attitudes to learning, particularly in Key Stage 2, are developing well. Pupils are engaged and keen to learn. This is impacting positively on their progress. More unsettled behaviour was seen in Key Stage 1 and the early years during this inspection.

Sometimes not enough is being done to promote positive play on the playground. Consequently, younger children's play is boisterous on occasions.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new head of school has made a very positive start. She has quickly developed systems and structures which demonstrate high expectations. As a result she has gained the respect of staff, pupils and parents. Staff say improvements have

continued to move ahead at a pace; for example, the new programme to develop reading and writing took five weeks from planning to implementation.

The executive headteacher has played an important role in ensuring a rapid transition to this new, more stable leadership structure. The partnership between the executive headteacher and the head of school is rapidly becoming a strength of the school.

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and pupil progress has improved. Data collected about pupils' progress are carefully checked and are now more accurate. Teachers are held to account at half-termly pupil progress meetings for the achievement of their pupils. Those pupils who need extra help are quickly identified. As a result, progress is improving.

The Chair of the IEB provides very effective challenge and support to school leaders. The members of the IEB are highly skilled and experienced. This enables them to make careful checks on the work of the school. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils, including those entitled to support through the pupil premium. One member of the IEB has good links with the community which are impacting positively on relationships with parents.

The spending and impact of extra money provided to the school through the pupil premium and the sports premium is carefully considered and monitored. Pupils are now taking part in more team sports and have access to better quality sports teaching.

External support

The representative of the local authority is a regular visitor to the school, both in her monitoring capacity and as a member of the IEB. The rigour and challenge she provides impacts positively on the quality of teaching and pupil progress. She supports both the school leaders and the IEB in driving school improvement. The representative of the diocese is also a member of the IEB and plays an important role monitoring the school's work to safeguard pupils. The school receives support from the executive headteacher's school, Dodworth St John the Baptist Church of England Primary Academy, through additional staffing and business support. This support is impacting positively on the provision for pupils who have special educational needs, safeguarding in the school and budget management.