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15 January 2015

Mrs Andrea Towey
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Henshall Avenue
Latchford
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 1PY

Dear Mrs Towey

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

Following my visit with Stephen Wall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 January 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.

This was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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's action plan is now fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Executive Director Families and Wellbeing for Warrington and the Director of Education for the Diocese of

Shrewsbury. The letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, in order that pupils across the school make good progress, particularly in mathematics and in writing, by ensuring that:
 - time is regularly given for pupils to check, correct or rewrite their work in response to the guidance given to them through the marking they receive
 - teachers check more frequently on the progress of pupils so work can be adapted more quickly, particularly for the most able, to better meet their learning needs
 - teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and completion of work are raised
 - support from teaching assistants is always of good quality and is well matched to the individual pupils' needs
 - pupils are given more opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical and writing skills in different subjects, in Years 1 to 6
 - pupils in Years 1 and 2 are secure in their learning and understanding of sounds and letters
 - across Years 1 to 6, pupils consistently spell words correctly, present work neatly, legibly and with accuracy
 - pupils are consistently interested in their work so that their attitudes to learning are always good and they readily respond to teachers' requests to complete their work.

- Urgently increase the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - accurate data is used and clearly summarised, to frequently measure the speed and effect of actions taken to improve teaching and pupils' achievement
 - prompt action is taken to enable teachers to meet their individual targets to improve their performance more quickly, particularly in the teaching of mathematics but also in writing
 - senior leaders decisively and more quickly tackle weaknesses in subject leadership, particularly in mathematics.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

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 governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 January 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair and four members of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and the diocese, groups of teachers and 12 pupils, selected at random, from Years 1 to 6. The lead inspector also spoke to a number of parents as they delivered their children to the school on the second day of his visit.

Context

The context of the school has changed very little since the previous inspection. Staffing has remained stable, with the exception of Year 4 where there has been more than one change of teacher over the last year.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's own analysis shows that pupils' progress is variable. It is better in Year 6 than in earlier year groups. The greatest progress has been in reading and the least in mathematics. Boys generally outperform girls. The gap between the attainment of vulnerable groups and other pupils of the same age is closing but is still too wide. In Year 6, for example, vulnerable pupils are two terms behind their classmates in mathematics and half a term in reading and writing. This inconsistency of achievement was reflected in the lessons seen during this visit.

As part of the inspection, 10 pupils of varying ages and abilities were heard reading. They did so with a fair degree of fluency and had effective ways of tackling words that were new to them. They did not always read with expression and even the most fluent tended to run one sentence into another, with the result that the meaning was lost. However, they all enjoyed reading and spoke with enthusiasm about the books that they read in school and at home. Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes are making good progress in recognising letters and the sounds they make.

In mathematics lessons, pupils have increasing opportunities to use their number skills to solve problems. They are also developing greater fluency with mental arithmetic.

The quality of teaching

The school has established a regular and wide-ranging programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. The records indicate that improvements have been made, but not at the same rate across the school. The senior leaders have identified where

further work is necessary and are adapting support to meet the particular needs of individual members of staff.

Examination of books and displays shows that teachers are placing considerable emphasis on improving the quality of the presentation. Most pupils take pride in their work, particularly in ensuring that their handwriting is well-formed and legible. However, in the lessons seen, there were instances where pupils sat on the floor to write. Some pupils held their pens and pencils very awkwardly. This made it difficult for them to form words fluently.

Pupils have increasing opportunities to write extended pieces of work, not only in English lessons but also in other subject areas, particularly history. They are encouraged to widen their vocabulary and to use varied sentence constructions to make their writing more vivid. However, a lack of clear policy means that teachers and pupils are unclear about how to improve spelling.

The quality of marking is improving. Teachers make regular and relevant comments and suggestions, which pupils are increasingly using to improve the quality of their work.

The school has reviewed its deployment of teaching assistants and is focusing their work on providing additional support for specific children who need particular types of extra help.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school conducts thorough checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and its records are up-to date and comprehensive. Pupils behave well around the school, showing consideration and courtesy for each other, for staff and for visitors. In the lessons observed, a small number of pupils occasionally lost concentration when teachers' explanations were unclear or when the tasks were not sufficiently challenging for them. Attendance has improved but is still below the average nationally and there are too many persistent absentees at the school.

Discussions with pupils showed that they feel safe at the school. They say that there is little if any bullying and they are confident that, should it occur, it would be tackled very speedily by staff. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last monitoring visit, the senior leaders have conducted a thorough revision of the action plan. This is now fit for purpose. It is based on three priorities which include the areas for improvement identified in the last Section 5 inspection. An impact statement for each goal identifies where improvements have been made

but also gives a specific indication of where further improvement is needed and what additional, remedial action will be taken to bring this about.

The achievement targets in the plan are considerably more demanding than in the first version. However, there is still room for greater ambition, particularly where Key Stage 1 targets are concerned, in order to compensate for the historical underperformance in the school. Considerable focus is placed on progress but this is not always related sufficiently closely to attainment.

An extensive programme of support and training has been provided for teachers and teaching assistants. This is closely related to the regular and rigorous reviews of pupils' progress that are now a central element of the management of the school. The staff who spoke to inspectors were very appreciative of the help they received and could show how this had led to improvements in their own practice.

The review of governance has been completed. The Standards and Curriculum Committee now meets three times each term to monitor the implementation of the action plan. Minutes of meetings show that governors are asking more searching questions about pupils' progress and about developments in particular subject areas. However, these tend to be in response to issues brought to their attention by the headteacher rather than as a result of their own analysis. The governors who spoke to the lead inspector did not display sufficient understanding of the urgency with which essential improvements need to be made within the school. Currently, there are two vacancies on the governing body.

There has been a delay in completing the local authority's review of pupil premium arrangements. An oral report of findings was provided in December. However, the final report was not delivered to the school until the day before the monitoring visit and the governors had not had time to consider it in detail.

External support

The school has received regular support from a local leader of education who has been closely involved in monitoring and analysing pupils' progress and challenging and supporting leaders in raising standards and aspirations. He has been meticulous in following up initiatives to ensure that they are having the intended impact.

The independent consultants for mathematics and English have conducted subject reviews and provided whole-school training and in-class support for specific teachers. The staff who spoke to inspectors were very appreciative of the work of both consultants.

The local authority's senior adviser has visited classes to monitor teaching and has provided an independent assessment of progress in implementing the action plan. He also attends meetings of governors to provide relevant advice and support.