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Mr Christopher Raymond
Headteacher
Christ The King Catholic School, Amesbury
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Dear Mr Raymond

Special measures monitoring inspection of Christ The King Catholic School, Amesbury

Following my visit with Marcia Northeast, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 2–3 April 2019, 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 February 2018. 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.

The school’s improvement plans are not fit for purpose. Plans lack specific milestones linked to pupils’ attainment and progress. This lessens the effectiveness of governors’ ability to determine the extent of the effectiveness of leaders’ actions.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher in consultation with HMI, before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2018.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - securing leadership capacity in the school so that leadership is not reliant on external support
 - securing an effective safeguarding culture
 - ensuring that middle leaders receive the training and support they need to meet the requirements of their roles
 - establishing clear systems to check the progress of all groups of pupils so that the measurement of pupils' achievement is accurate
 - ensuring that leaders' checks on teaching are robust and that teachers act on leaders' advice so that pupils who have previously underachieved catch up quickly
 - improving the provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that these pupils make consistently good progress
 - insisting that teacher assessment is accurate
 - ensuring that curriculum requirements are met, in English, mathematics and across a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that leaders and governors track pupils' behaviour so that it improves and becomes good.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenge middle-attaining and the most able pupils sufficiently
 - teachers plan work that meets pupils' needs in English so that pupils use and apply their reading and writing skills well and make good progress
 - teachers plan work that enables pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to reason and solve problems proficiently for their age
 - teaching in the early years is consistently good, assessment is accurate and provision inside and outside is consistently good.
- Improve the quality of personal development and welfare urgently by ensuring that:
 - teaching motivates and interests pupils, so that pupils' passivity is minimised, and pupils consistently apply their best effort to their learning
 - learning time is used to its full extent across the day

- safeguarding systems minimise pupils’ risk of harm and support the most vulnerable pupils to achieve consistently well.

An external review of the school’s use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 2 April 2019 to 3 April 2019

Evidence

The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer, and held a telephone conversation with a representative from Clifton Diocese. Inspectors visited lessons with the headteacher and senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning and behaviour. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding documents, school improvement plans and leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning and met with senior leaders and groups of pupils. Inspectors did not focus on the wider curriculum on this inspection.

Context

Staffing has remained generally stable since the previous monitoring visit. One new teacher has joined the school. The leader of the resource base has taken up a leadership role for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A new role, of inclusion lead, has also been established. The structure of leadership has been redefined. The deputy headteacher has taken on the assessment lead role. The leadership structure now includes an assistant headteacher whose focus is on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have made clear improvements to the quality of education provided for the pupils. The determined actions of the headteacher have brought greater stability in the school. Staff morale is much improved, and parents continue to be reassured by the improvements being made across the school. Leaders have resisted quick fixes. Instead, they are putting into place the essential steps to ensure long-term, sustainable improvement.

Following the last monitoring visit, the school has developed the roles of middle leaders. These are still being established, but English and mathematics leaders have supported staff well to better understand the expectations for the year groups they teach. Middle leaders have a clear view of the strengths of the school and are tackling the remaining weaknesses steadily.

There is now greater monitoring of classroom practice which is more precisely focused on pupils' achievement. Expectations have been raised of what pupils can and should achieve. Where practice falls short of these expectations, the headteacher has taken decisive action and tailored support is in place to remedy weaknesses. Even so, the impact of this work is variable, and the quality of teaching and learning is not leading to sufficient gains in pupils' progress.

The new leader of special educational needs and the inclusion lead are putting systems into place to improve the quality of provision and pupils' achievement. This work is already paying dividends. Additional interventions and better teaching are beginning to support these pupils to catch up. Leaders now have an accurate view of pupils' starting points and have identified gaps in pupils' learning. However, this work is very recent. Leaders have not yet had opportunities to monitor pupils' learning or the progress that pupils make in lessons.

Leaders now track what pupils know and can do and the progress that pupils make. They are gaining confidence in the reliability of this information through external validation and internal moderation. Teachers and leaders regularly discuss the progress made by their classes and how pupils can be supported to achieve higher standards. Leaders' current plans to tackle the legacy of weak teaching, learning and assessment are being applied and are still evolving but more urgency is required in order to overcome the legacy of underachievement.

Governors are resolute in their ambition for the school but remain heavily reliant on the expertise of temporary appointments brokered by the local authority and diocese. A number of governor vacancies still exist. Currently, there are no succession plans in place and consequently governance is vulnerable. However, the governing body has clarified how it will work with school leaders. Governors now visit regularly to understand, at first-hand, the work of the school. They have linked with subject leaders and align their visits to school priorities so that they gain the information needed to gauge how well leaders are making the improvements necessary. Governors now ask probing questions and provide challenge to ensure that school leaders provide evidence for the assertions they make.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have improved their structures and processes to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. So far, this has ensured greater consistency in the presentation of work books and is gradually raising teachers' expectations and compliance with school policies.

Leaders' work to develop teachers' subject knowledge in English and mathematics is not having a sufficiently speedy impact. Current work to develop teachers' skills and knowledge in assessing what pupils can do, know and understand is, however, paying off. Teachers' assessment is now usually accurate. However, teachers do not use this information consistently well to plan and sequence teaching that is closely matched to pupils' needs. This hinders the progress that current pupils make. Consequently, pupils who previously underachieved are not yet catching up quickly enough.

The school's chosen, more structured approach to the teaching of mathematics is now enabling pupils to successfully use and apply their knowledge for solving a range of problems. However, the full impact of this approach has not been realised

yet because teachers are not adept at adapting their planning to direct pupils to suitable starting points. The most able pupils often do not explain their thinking and reasoning reliably or in sufficient detail.

Where teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs, pupils show high levels of resilience and begin to catch up in their learning. However, where teaching does not meet pupils' needs well enough, pupils demonstrate poor levels of concentration and their learning falters. Some children sit and wait for adults to notice that they have stopped working. When teachers are too slow to notice, pupils' underachievement persists and gaps in pupils' learning are not tackled quickly enough.

Outcomes for pupils

Children in the early years are making strong progress towards being well prepared for Year 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff know the children and their needs well. Children enjoy a range of different challenges and activities matched well to their learning and developmental needs. Similarly, pupils in the resource base achieve well.

Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 still have gaps in their phonic knowledge. Although leaders have implemented a new system for the organisation and teaching of phonics, pupils are not catching up quickly enough. Similarly, the support for the teaching of reading is bringing about some improvements but it remains too inconsistent across classes. Weaknesses in pupils' phonic knowledge are reflected in sometimes-inaccurate spelling which limits the quality of their writing.

The teaching of mathematics is helping to close gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. Teaching is supporting pupils' ability to reason and solve problems but gaps in pupils' number knowledge remain wide.

The school has just begun to make close checks on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Currently, these pupils are not making strong enough gains to compensate for previously weak teaching in writing and mathematics. There are, however, some promising signs of catch up, particularly in reading.

External support

The local authority has been effective in supporting the school since the last inspection. The work of the local authority English and mathematics leads has been pivotal in providing the depth of experience to support leaders who are new in their roles. The local authority conducts regular reviews to evaluate the school's effectiveness. The conclusions from these visits mirror leaders' understanding that headway has been made, but there is still much to do.

External support from the Pickwick Learning and Teaching Alliance is providing highly effective support and is still very much a necessary aspect of this school's improvement journey. This support is vital in increasing the school's leadership capacity. For example, the training and support of middle leaders has developed leadership capacity in the school. Similarly, the support from a leader of special educational needs (SENCo) from a local primary school is supporting the new SENCo in establishing effective systems to support pupils with SEND. The support in developing teaching subject knowledge in phonics has been effective. However, too few staff have had the opportunity to take part in this training, which has limited the impact on pupils' progress.