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30 April 2018

Mrs M Bradbury  
Headteacher  
St George's CofE First School  
Stevenson Avenue  
Redditch  
Worcestershire  
B98 8LU

Dear Mrs Bradbury

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St George's CofE First School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 April 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 November 2016.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

the school's improvement plan is fit for purpose

the school may not appoint newly qualified teachers 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 Worcester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2016**

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, including in the early years, and accelerate pupils' progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - immerse pupils in language so they speedily acquire and apply the spoken and written vocabulary they need in each subject
  - assess accurately what pupils know and can do
  - plan lessons which systematically build on previous learning
  - provide purposeful learning activities which challenge the most able pupils
  - provide suitable tasks for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so they are fully engaged in day-to-day lessons
  - identify errors in pupils' work so that they learn from their mistakes
  - teach pupils of all ages how to present their work neatly, and consistently expect high standards from them.
- Improve leadership at all levels by ensuring that leaders and managers:
  - identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge and make sure appropriate support is provided speedily and effectively
  - track pupils' progress in detail so that those pupils in danger of falling behind are identified and given support
  - share clear and consistent expectations of teachers
  - check, challenge and correct teachers who fail to suitably implement agreed approaches to teaching
  - check for weaknesses in teaching and ensure that staff receive the right guidance, support or challenge.
- Ensure that pupils are supervised during lunchtimes so that quarrels are quickly averted and do not escalate.

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

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed to the school.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 April 2018**

### **Evidence**

I looked at pupils' work, spoke to them about their learning and observed behaviour in lessons. You and the deputy headteacher accompanied me for most of the visits. I scrutinised pupils' books for English and mathematics. I met formally with a group of pupils and observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.

I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with two representatives from the local authority and with a diocesan representative.

In addition, I spoke with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day. I looked at various school documents, reports from educational consultants and the school's website. I also checked the single central record.

### **Context**

There have been significant staffing changes since the inspection in November 2016. The headteacher at the time of the previous inspection retired in July 2017. You were appointed as interim headteacher in September 2017 and appointed permanently in February 2018. Seven teachers left the school and one began maternity leave. New teachers joined the school in September 2017, January, February and April 2018. Two teachers are on secondment from another local school and two teachers are on temporary, fixed-term contracts. The deputy headteacher took on a class-teaching commitment for a large part of the spring term 2018 until new staff were appointed. There are currently no middle leaders at the school. A staffing restructure is planned and currently in the consultation phase. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in January 2017. Four new governors have been appointed.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The drive to improve the school was slow to start. Little was done until the arrival of a new headteacher, nine months after the inspection. Standards declined further and children did not receive a suitable quality of education. However, since September 2017, effective action has been taken and more significant progress is evident. Leaders and governors are well aware that this momentum must be built upon in order to ensure the removal of special measures within the timescales set.

You have quickly gained an accurate picture of the challenges facing the school. You are determined to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve and make the school a better place for pupils to learn. You have shared your vision with the deputy headteacher and a strong partnership has developed. Together, you are

driving the necessary improvements. You have introduced a short-term improvement plan alongside the statement of action. It addresses all of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The plan also includes a focus on developing a positive ethos and a can-do culture across the school. It has appropriate milestones for the current academic year. Actions taken are reviewed each half term and the impact evaluated. However, the plan is not yet fully developed beyond the end of the summer term and requires extension now that permanent leadership has been secured for the school.

Since July 2017, there has been instability in staffing and several teaching vacancies. Staff turnover has limited the pace of improvement. Each half term, leaders have had to re-establish expectations through the induction of new teachers. However, the staff currently at the school show a strong commitment to the pupils. They are supportive of each other and a sense of teamwork is emerging. A positive ethos is developing, and the buzz of learning was evident in the school at the time of the monitoring inspection.

You set out your expectations of teachers as soon as you arrived, based on the teachers' standards. You have revised the staff code of conduct and shared it with all staff. You rightly challenge underperformance and unprofessional conduct. The deputy headteacher is no longer teaching full-time and is able to focus on her leadership responsibilities again. The changes that you have made are starting to have an impact on the ethos and culture of the school. Higher expectations are evident in the learning environment and in the work that pupils complete in their books. While there is still work to be done, staff across the school are rising to the challenge. A revised staffing structure with additional leadership roles is currently out for consultation, with implementation planned for September 2018.

Additional support for the leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities was brought in while the deputy headteacher was class-based. This enabled statutory work to be completed while the deputy headteacher continued to support staff to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were correctly identified.

Following the last inspection, the chair of the governing body resigned. An inexperienced governor was appointed as the new chair in January 2017. A link with a more experienced governor was brokered to provide support. However, infrequent contact has limited the impact of this support. The external review of governance recommended at the previous inspection took place in June 2017. Governors were given more than 20 actions to consider in order to become more effective. They have been slow to act upon these recommendations until recently. For example, there is currently no governor monitoring the schedule in place, although minutes show an increased challenge during meetings. Governors now have a realistic view of the school and acknowledge that the pace of change has been too slow.

You revised the arrangements for safeguarding in order to develop a stronger

culture of keeping children safe across the school. A new single central record is now in place. Staff understand that it is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe, and have become more vigilant as a result of the training they have received.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated but there is still much work to be done to ensure consistently good teaching across the school. The frequent changes in staffing have slowed the improvements.

Where there has been more stable staffing, transformations have taken place. For example, in the early years the learning environment now provides an exciting, stimulating place to be. Children are highly engaged in activities which are well matched to their needs. Adults know how to support them effectively. As a result, children make rapid progress. There has been a focus on developing language and communication skills. Children are now confident to engage in conversation. They are beginning to express themselves more clearly in English. Assessment is accurate and children's progress is recorded in high-quality learning journals.

You have ensured that expectations for classroom practice are clear. Guidelines for planning and targets for pupils' progress have been explained. You have set standards for the learning environment and for how pupils' work should be presented. You have established a robust monitoring timetable using regular lesson observations and work scrutiny. You use rigorous challenge and highly effective coaching support to develop the quality of teaching further. As a result, there is evidence of a more consistent approach in the teaching of phonics, reading and writing, with higher quality work being expected in some classes. There is still work to be done, however. In too many books, pupils' errors go unchecked and pride in their work is not always encouraged or expected.

A comprehensive tracking and assessment system is now in place. This is helping leaders and teachers to identify gaps in pupils' learning. The school easily identifies pupils at risk of falling behind and tracks their progress more closely. Teachers have attended training in assessing pupils accurately. They are now involved in looking at achievement information and analysing it. Planning is improving as a result. There is evidence of a more systematic approach to building on pupils' prior knowledge. This can be seen particularly in writing and topic work. It is less evident in mathematics and science. There is a tendency for low-attaining pupils or those who speak English as an additional language to be identified as having SEN and/or disabilities.

However, identification is more accurate than before. You and other leaders are constantly checking the data collected to ensure that it is accurate. An external adviser is continuing to support the school with assessment and moderation. The school will be subject to external moderation by the local authority this summer.

Across the school, the focus has been on developing quality first teaching. There is

still work to do to ensure that the needs of the most able and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are met. Appropriate support is beginning to help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to be more engaged in lessons. However, there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils.

Training for staff in how to teach phonics has been effective. There is now a more consistent approach. Phonics sessions have a clearer focus and purpose. Assessment is more accurate, and pupils are placed in the groups best suited to their needs and abilities. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress in phonics. The external support for phonics is now being gradually decreased. The school has identified a member of staff with the capacity and ability to drive further improvements.

Work to develop pupils' vocabulary and communication skills has been highly successful. Pupils across the school are now able to communicate confidently using a wide-ranging vocabulary. They often initiate conversations and can explain what they are doing in detail. Their written work is beginning to be of a much higher quality. The external support provided through an oracy project has been instrumental in developing staff skills in this area. There is now a need to develop similar skills in mathematics and across other subjects in the curriculum.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

You are taking action to further improve behaviour. You have shared with staff and pupils guidelines as to what constitutes acceptable behaviour. As a result of higher expectations, more behaviour incidents were reported during the autumn term. It appeared as if behaviour had deteriorated. However, as pupils responded positively to the higher expectations the number of referrals dropped considerably. Leaders are supporting new staff so that they understand what is expected in order to ensure consistency across the school.

Leaders have recently reviewed and revised the lunchtime routines. Adequate levels of supervision are now evident both in the dining hall and outside on the playground. Adults understand their roles and responsibilities. Pupils can choose to sit by their friends in the dining hall. This is leading to better behaviour while eating. Pupils of all ages clearly understand the school's expectations. Adults encourage pupils to engage in a range of games and activities on the playground. Relationships are positive and any issue is quickly dealt with. Year 4 pupils have the opportunity to apply for a 'lunchtime job'. These include welfare warden, corridor steward and dining hall monitor. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously and carry them out sensibly. This is helping pupils develop a sense of pride in their school. While it is still early days for the new systems, pupils are happier and there have been fewer complaints.

The school provides a quiet environment for pupils who struggle to cope on the playground. It provides a safe, nurturing space where they can eat their lunch and

relax. Staff support pupils to play games and socialise. This support is helping to prevent challenging behaviour from escalating.

During the inspection, the school was calm and purposeful. Pupils of all ages worked and played well together. Learning was only interrupted by off-task poor behaviour when teachers did not match work carefully to pupils' needs, interests or abilities. Often this was due to new staff still finding out what pupils are able to do. The majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. Many pupils were eager to share their work with the inspector. Some pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work but this is not yet consistent across the school. This is because not all adults insist on high-quality work or make it clear to pupils what is expected.

Attendance has declined since the last inspection. At the time of the inspection attendance was 93.4%. This is much lower than national averages. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has risen. It is much higher than national levels. This is due to many pupils taking extended leave. Many parents underestimate the impact that missing occasional days from school has on their children's attainment and progress. Absence from school is monitored carefully. Leaders follow up absences with phone calls, home visits and by issuing formal letters. These actions are not having an impact; parents still choose to take their children out of school. Leaders send text message reminders in the morning to parents of children who are regularly late. Despite leaders' best intentions, significant numbers of pupils arrive late each day. Leaders know that pupils who are missing school regularly are making less progress. Leaders are aware of the need to improve attendance and punctuality levels across the school.

Parents who spoke to the inspector are positive about behaviour. They state that there is no bullying and that their children are happy and safe at school. Pupils feel safe at school. When explaining why they liked their school, pupils said it was because other children were kind, honest, compassionate and showed respect.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Following the last inspection, outcomes for some pupils declined. The school's assessment information for current pupils indicates that this decline has been halted.

In 2017, the proportion of pupils leaving the early years foundation stage with a good level of development fell to 38%. This is well below national averages and was a significant drop from previous years. Currently, nearly half of the children in the early years are already showing a good level of development. This figure is set to increase as children continue to benefit from the improved provision.

At the end of 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 was 48%. This was well below national

averages and was a decline compared to previous year. Leaders expect the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard at the end of 2018 to show a considerable improvement on 2017 figures. This is a result of a high focus on developing the quality of phonics teaching across the early years and key stage 1.

At the end of key stage 1, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics all showed an increase on previous years. However, attainment remained well below national levels in all three subjects. Leaders' analysis of current pupils' progress shows improvements. All groups of pupils are making better progress, particularly in writing. Leaders have set aspirational targets. These may not be realised in full this year but outcomes at the end of 2018 are set to rise and the gap with national levels will begin to close.

### **External support**

Support from external partners is effective. Leaders commissioned support from a local primary school to improve the effectiveness of provision in phonics. As a result, there is now capacity to lead this area of the curriculum within the school. The local authority has provided effective support to the school, especially for the early years and through an oracy project. Support has also been brokered to support the development of high-quality teaching and assessment. The link school improvement adviser knows the school well and provides good challenge. Regular reviews, carried out jointly with the diocese, clearly identify progress and areas requiring further improvement. Support for governors enabled the successful recruitment of a permanent headteacher. Those providing external support have identified governance as the focus for the next school review.

### **Leaders and governors should ensure that:**

- they continue to work with parents to improve the attendance and punctuality of those pupils who are persistently absent or late for school.