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Mrs Jane Fraser
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fraser

Special measures monitoring inspection of Queensway Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Nathan Kemp, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 21–22 June 2017, 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 October 2016.

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 action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Torbay. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2016.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governors, by:
 - establishing a culture of high expectations throughout the school that is focused consistently on improving outcomes for all pupils
 - ensuring that senior and middle leaders are held to account for pupils' outcomes in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that timely advice, appropriate expertise and robust challenge is provided by the multi-academy trust to support the headteacher and governors to swiftly raise standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve, including in the early years
 - improving the subject knowledge of teaching assistants in key stage 1 so that they use the correct letter sounds
 - providing training which enables teachers to assess pupils' work accurately
 - making sure that teachers provide appropriate feedback that enables pupils to clearly understand what they need to do to improve
 - improving the teaching of mathematics and the quality of the mathematics curriculum.
- Improve pupils' outcomes, by:
 - providing the most able pupils with activities that engage and challenge them to deepen and extend their learning
 - supporting disadvantaged pupils, including those who are the most able, to achieve well and make the progress of which they are capable
 - ensuring that those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the support they need to engage them in their learning and help them to make good progress
 - making sure that pupils consistently take pride in their work and present it neatly
 - ensuring that all low-level behaviour is eradicated in Reception, key stage 1 and during lunchtimes in the hall.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 21 to 22 June 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, middle leaders, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and the trust's area adviser. The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with the interim chief executive officer of Plymouth Catholic Schools' Trust (CAST), with an external adviser who provides external support, and with the director for school improvement in Torbay.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection there have been considerable staff changes: five class teachers have been appointed since February 2017. Some are temporary staff. The assistant headteacher is now a permanent member of staff. There are two new governors. A national leader of education (NLE) is providing leadership support.

The trust has brokered additional external support for the school to help the school improve the quality of education it provides. This support has been with two providers. The first phase of support, provided through the Torbay teaching alliance, concluded in February 2017. The current external support with Babcock school improvement services was established in March 2017 and encompasses a range of subject-specific and leadership support for the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You, your leadership team and governors were initially slow to respond to the findings of the previous section 5 inspection. However, over the course of this term there is a gathering momentum and greater willingness to tackle the key priorities. You have not shied away from tackling underperformance; this has resulted in considerable staff changes and some improvement to teaching overall. You have successfully addressed many of the inadequacies in teaching and learning.

Your recruitment of suitable staff, allied with a more effective training programme, is beginning to strengthen the profile of teachers' subject knowledge and skills. Staff are positive about the improvements you are making.

You and your leaders have sought to gain a more accurate picture of pupils' performance. For example, you have secured moderation of assessment for the early years and key stage 2 this year. The school's assessment judgements are validated and valuable staff training is provided. As a result, teachers' assessments are increasingly accurate in most classes. However, leaders are continuing to use a range of systems which provide information in a variety of ways. Because of this, it is difficult for governors to compare like with like and gain an accurate picture of the impact of the leader's actions on pupils' outcomes. In turn, this lessens

governors' ability to challenge leaders and to hold them to account for their slowness in raising standards.

Newly appointed English and mathematics leaders are keen to tackle the endemic weaknesses and have responded well to external training and support. As a result, they are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The staff team are developing their subject knowledge in the teaching of writing and mathematics and are able to plan sequences of learning that meet pupils' needs.

A detailed monitoring programme has been put together, with more regular checks of pupils' learning. This is providing teachers with feedback and points to improve. However, you and the senior leadership team are not rigorously following up to ensure these points are addressed and that pupils are making better progress. As a result of your monitoring, pupils who have previously underachieved are beginning to catch up, but the lack of checking and effective follow-up is slowing the rate of improvement.

Leaders' strategy to improve pupils' presentation in books is making a difference. Teachers have raised their expectations and increasingly expect pupils to present their work well. Your action to adapt the school timetable to provide time in the day dedicated to developing pupils' handwriting skills has ensured that a growing proportion of pupils form their letters accurately and present their work well.

You have re-assessed how teaching assistants work in the school. Most teaching assistants now support pupils within their classes. This is working well in some classes where staff are clear about the aims of the lesson and are adapting activities purposefully to meet pupils' differing needs and abilities. However, there remain a number of classes where staff are not clear about what they should be doing to support pupils. You recognise that further training is needed to ensure that all teaching assistants have the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their roles effectively.

External evaluation of the school's performance this term is too limited. The statement of action has been amended and is now fit for purpose. However, changes in the commissioning of external support mean that those responsible for providing the school with support are also responsible for evaluating the impact of their actions. As a result, it is difficult for governors to get a clear picture of the impact of the support for the school and to validate improvement. This aspect requires urgent attention.

The governing body is functioning more effectively than it has in the past. A key group of governors reviews the impact of leaders' work against the areas for improvement identified at the last full inspection. The school improvement plan is fit for purpose and reflects the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Governors use the information they have, to hold you and senior leaders to account for improvement. However, the absence of specific milestones and

quantifiable targets on the school's action plan makes it difficult for governors to monitor the school's work and challenge underperformance with the necessary rigour.

The school engaged in a pupil premium review in March 2017. This showed that governors are taking appropriate action to begin to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. For example, a leader has been specifically identified to lead this aspect of improvement work. Individualised learning plans to address these pupils' prior underachievement are in place and are closely monitored. Leaders have strengthened their checks through a monthly review of pupils' progress as part of school's pupil premium strategy, and some improvement is already evident in mathematics. However, underachievement in reading and writing remains widespread for this group of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous section 5 inspection. The impact of the leaders' strategy for improving teaching and learning is most evident over the last eight weeks. However, this period is short and improvement has not yet been sustained for long enough to reverse the widespread underachievement caused by previously weak teaching.

Nevertheless, new appointments have been made and the teaching team is more stable. Most teachers are new since February 2017. Both new and experienced members of staff are ensuring that pupils are beginning to catch up towards expected standards. However, there is a stark contrast between the strongest and the weakest teaching in the school.

There remain notable differences in the quality of teaching, assessment and learning across the school. Better monitoring and professional development over the term is helping teaching to improve so that teachers' assessments are now being used to fill gaps in pupils' learning and build on what pupils can already do, know and understand. There is a discernible improvement in pupils' progress in Years 2 and 6.

Where teaching remains weak, the underachievement of pupils is not being reduced quickly enough. The pace of learning in many classes is too slow. Some pupils are slow to start work, while others finish quickly because work is too easy and they have not been given additional tasks. As a result, learning time is not yet fully utilised. In too many classes, middle-attaining pupils underachieve in reading and writing. This is because leaders have not followed up to ensure that teaching and planning address weaknesses and underachievement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour is improving. The frequency of incidents of challenging behaviour in the school is falling. Staff are applying the schools' behaviour policy increasingly effectively.

You have successfully reversed the downward trend in attendance. The work of the family support worker and better monitoring of pupils' absence are paying off. Prioritising good attendance for disadvantaged pupils through the school's pupil premium strategy is proving successful. The attendance of this group of pupils is improving quickly.

Those staff who are responsible for safeguarding pupils have ensured that staff training is up to date and in line with current legislation. Leaders have introduced a new online system to file information about vulnerable pupils and record their monitoring and actions taken to safeguarding pupils. However, in moving to this new system some record-keeping has been inconsistent.

Designated safeguarding leaders make referrals and work extensively with external agencies. However, on occasion, referrals for external support have not been as timely as they could have been and the coordinated response from the local authority safeguarding teams has been slow. In the absence of minutes, or where there is slow production of minutes by local authority representatives, leaders responsible for safeguarding in the school need to ensure that their own minutes of meetings provide an accurate record of multi-agency meetings. Safeguarding audits by the trust and local authority have not ensured that inconsistencies in the school's safeguarding record-keeping were identified.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders' actions are only just beginning to address the decline in standards across the school. This is most effective in mathematics. The introduction of standardised testing in mathematics and reading is helping to provide increasingly accurate assessments of what pupils can and cannot do. However, you are acutely aware that there are no pupils reaching higher standards in reading and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2.

Outcomes for the majority of current pupils are stronger in mathematics than in reading and writing. Pupils' basic number skills are developing and, increasingly, pupils are expected to explain their thinking in mathematics. This is helping them develop their basic skills in number. Leaders have provided support to ensure that teaching is planned successfully in sequences so that pupils gain new knowledge, as well as practising and applying their mathematical understanding through reasoning and solving problems. However, this is not yet embedded in all classes, particularly at key stage 1.

In English, there are positive signs of improving pupils' progress in writing in some key stage 2 classes. However, in other classes, there has been no discernible improvement in the quality of teaching of English. Pupils' underachievement remains. In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' outcomes in writing were poor. There has been some improvement in pupils' ability to join their handwriting and write with greater stamina across the school. Pupils are beginning to edit and improve their work with greater success than previously. This is helping pupils structure their writing increasingly effectively. However, key skills in writing are not yet being secured quickly enough. Pupils' command of spelling and sentence structure and their ability to use a range of punctuation effectively are still too variable, and this restricts pupils' progress.

Pupils in Year 6 have made rapid progress in recent weeks. However, underachievement over time has been such that this better teaching has not made up for previously weak teaching. As a result, one fifth of pupils are working at the standards expected for their age in writing. Your assessment is that only half of the year group are meeting expected standards in mathematics. This is reflective of inadequate progress over time.

Leaders are not successfully addressing the areas of weaknesses in the teaching of reading identified at the last inspection. Consequently, there is limited improvement in pupils' outcomes in this subject. Pupils read with varying accuracy and fluency for their age. Too many middle- and low-attaining pupils are not supported to read regularly. As a result, opportunities to develop a deep and rich understanding of a range of fiction and non-fiction texts remain too limited.

The teaching of phonics at key stage 1 is regular and bringing about an increase in the proportion of pupils who are meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check. However, evidence in phonics lessons and in pupils' books shows that pupils still find it difficult to apply these skills consistently to their writing. This hampers the progress that these pupils make.

External support

The multi-academy trust (MAT) has brokered a range of support for the school from a range of organisations. This has included leadership support, support to improve teaching, learning and assessment and pastoral support for leaders and staff.

External support has been provided by different agencies during the course of the year. The changes have slowed the school improvement journey. Current external support is helping teachers to develop their subject knowledge in English and mathematics. It is also providing clarity to middle leaders about their roles and responsibilities.

The MAT has also provided support through its area school adviser. This has provided effective support in terms of staff recruitment and pastoral support for

you. However, overall the external support provided has been slow to address weaknesses in the strategic leadership of the school.