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27 June 2013

Mrs White  
The Interim Headteacher  
St James Church of England Junior School  
Upton Street  
Gloucester  
Gloucestershire  
GL1 4JU

Dear Mrs White

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St James Church of England Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2014, 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 June 2013. 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 not making enough 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire and the Diocese of Gloucester.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by ensuring teachers:
  - plan learning activities that make pupils of all abilities think hard, especially the more able
  - provide effective support for those pupils who need specific extra help, especially those with special educational needs
  - do not talk for too long and allow pupils to start their work promptly so they can find things out for themselves
  - explain to pupils what they need to do to be successful in lessons and in order to produce their best work.
- Improve pupils' achievement, especially in writing, by:
  - providing more opportunities to for pupils to write at length in order to practise and extend their writing skills
  - making sure teachers demonstrate to pupils what they need to do to develop their writing skills
  - teaching pupils higher-level reading skills such as inference and deduction
  - giving pupils sufficient opportunities to respond to their marking and make the necessary improvements to their work.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that improvement plans have precise targets for pupils' progress and for improving the quality of teaching, and that they are implemented effectively and checked regularly
  - setting clear expectations and guidance for teachers about what is expected in lessons and checking robustly that they are being followed
  - establishing an efficient and effective system for tracking the attainment and progress of pupils
  - carrying out an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
  - developing the skills and knowledge of the governing body to enable governors to check the school's work for themselves more effectively.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 26 June 2014**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, the deputy headteacher, and the leaders for English, mathematics and assessment. Discussions were also held with the newly appointed substantive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority and Diocese of Gloucester. In addition, I undertook visits to a number of lessons, and looked at a range of pupils' books from each class. The latest school and governing body improvement plans were also evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection you have been brought in as an interim headteacher, pending the new substantive headteacher starting her post in September 2014. The number of governors has been reduced. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected, along with governors from the local authority and Diocese of Gloucester. Three new governors have yet to be elected. Two teachers are leaving the school in July 2014 and their replacements are due to be appointed in the near future.

The ventilation problems reported in my last letter have been resolved.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Around half of the school's pupils are entitled to the pupil premium. Through improved tracking systems you have identified that the progress that these pupils make is inadequate. They are not making the accelerated progress they need in order to catch up with their peers. Alarming, the achievement gap between them and their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics is growing. In almost all classes, the least and most able pupils and some of those identified as having a disability and/or special educational needs are not making enough progress and are not achieving as well as they should. Senior leaders have also identified that too many pupils throughout the school are not making the progress they should in mathematics.

Despite the deficiencies in mathematics, the school's current information on pupils' performance shows pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is on track to improve against the school's 2013 performance. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 by the end of Year 6 appears set to rise in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6 there appears to have been an increase in the proportion of the most able pupils attaining Level 5 in reading and mathematics; writing remains static. However, not enough of the most able pupils reach Level 5 in all three areas;

the proportion on track to achieve against this measure has dropped by 10% compared with 2013.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching remains too variable across year groups and subjects. Pupils are being provided with more opportunities to write at length and to extend their writing skills in lessons other than English. Your own book scrutinies have shown that, too frequently, the work given to pupils is not challenging enough. This was also my judgement from the books I saw. A couple of pupils that I spoke with during lessons also reported that they found the work they were doing was too easy.

Teachers' marking is too inconsistent. Some teachers provide clear and highly informative feedback to pupils. Subject leaders have not placed enough emphasis on this and have not demanded that all teachers provide regular feedback of the highest quality.

You appreciate that to reduce the need for 'catch-up' interventions and 'booster sessions', particularly in Year 6, at least good quality class teaching needs to be in place first. Teachers have had recent training. They are using the information they gained from the training to raise aspirations in lessons. Necessary follow-up training and support are planned for. Teachers and teaching assistants need to consolidate and apply the training they have had. It is important that teaching schemes and systems are followed through and not changed, unless really needed. To ensure they can do the basics well, the teachers at St James Junior School need to have stability rather than a further barrage of initiatives.

Teachers have been over reliant on the school's leaders providing them with information about how well pupils are learning. The school has used testing to establish the attainment levels of pupils. Teachers now need to take greater responsibility for more frequent and accurate assessment of pupils in their class, inputting data into the school's systems, and planning actions where pupils' progress is not good enough. Senior leaders and the local authority need to continue to ensure that the data are accurate.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Classrooms have attractive displays of current work produced by the pupils. They also have good quality 'notes' and cues displayed around the room to help support pupils' learning. Communal areas are well cared for and demonstrate pupils' respect for their environment and each other's work. During my visit pupils were polite and courteous. In the lessons I visited they were concentrating on their work and paying good attention to adults. They are keen to learn.

In some of the writing books seen pupils, in some classes, started off with good quality handwriting, showing pride in their new books. However, this quickly dwindled into scruffy and unkempt presentation that has not been corrected by staff. In mathematics books, the school's rule for allocating a square for each mathematical sign or number is frequently flouted by pupils and not checked by staff.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The constant change in leadership of the school has impeded the school's performance. New initiatives have been introduced, but are too often not followed through. Emphasis has been placed on booster classes and interventions for pupils in Year 6 to help them 'catch up'. This is no different to what has occurred too often in the past, which led to the school requiring special measures in the first place.

The current temporary arrangement for the school's leadership is working well. The new substantive headteacher is regularly visiting the school. She is helping to determine actions that need to be taken, ready for September. It is clear that there is strong agreement between you both, as shown by the new joint approach to improve the school quickly and securely.

Staff reported to me that they had felt pressurised to change their practice, but without enough support or guidance to demonstrate how they should do it. They told me that they now have a better understanding of what to do and feel more confident about doing it. They are really pleased that they have met with the new headteacher. They are greatly encouraged by her commitment to stay with them and lead the school forward. This appointment, long overdue, has raised staff spirits and given them new impetus. Senior leaders have new responsibilities which have kindled a collective 'fire' of energy and enthusiasm. Further training, working with other schools and seeing best practice, is needed to ensure that each one of these individual 'flames' is nurtured. It is vitally important that they do not get 'dampened' or 'snuffed out'.

The governing body and local authority have not ensured that the school improves quickly enough. Performance management for teachers and teaching assistants has been weak and ineffective. The school is allocated a significant amount of funding to support pupils entitled to the pupil premium. A lot of this money has not been spent. No one has ensured that the school is using this money wisely. The new Chair of the Governing Body is determined that governors will have a tight focus on improving pupils' learning. It is imperative that all leaders, including governors, remain focused on securing rapid improvement across the school and do not become distracted with peripheral issues.

The school's latest action plans make reference to the most urgent areas that need improvement. However, they are again not fit for purpose. This is because the

evaluation of each action is not clear enough for senior leaders and the governing body to measure progress easily or sharply. They do not provide a strong 'road map' out of special measures.

The school is now using a new system to track the progress that pupils are making. However, the school does not always share its analysis of the data in a straightforward way. Consequently, the governing body is not presented with information about the achievement of pupils that is easy to understand. This does not give them a good enough basis to quickly challenge the school's performance.

### **External support**

Local authority officers are involved in regular reviews of the school. Although the resulting reports are generally supportive for identifying areas for improvement, there is not enough focus on driving improvements for those pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium. Notes from the visits show that sometimes officers have not made firm judgements about key aspects of the school's work. This is not helpful for the school's leaders or governing body. The local authority has not sufficiently challenged the school on its use of pupil premium funding.

Moderation of pupils' achievement has occurred with the local infant school. This is a great start. We discussed how the school might reinforce this with working more closely in partnership with the infant and senior schools. We also talked about exploring the opportunities for working with the local children's centre to maintain children's progress across the summer holidays.