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12 December 2014

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

Dear Mrs Anderton

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 December with Gary Chown, Associate Inspector, 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 fourth 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 we are 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, 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 December 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. We met with you and the other members of the senior leadership team. We held specific meetings with the leaders for mathematics, English, the curriculum and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors met with the deputy headteacher to discuss pupils receiving premium. Discussions were also held with the school council, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors undertook visits to six lessons and one group of pupils receiving extra support in helping them with their reading. The latter and two lessons were joint observations with you. In addition, I looked at a range of pupils' books from each class in Years 4 and 5, while my colleague looked at pupils' books in Years 3 and 6 with you.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection you have been appointed as the new substantive headteacher. There is one teacher on secondment from another school, one teacher is currently absent due to illness and a new teaching assistant has been appointed. Two new governors have been elected, with a further two yet to be elected.

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

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2014 showed an improvement on 2013 for the proportions of pupils attaining Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. Three pupils achieved Level 6 mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 in reading and mathematics was lower than previously predicted by the school and was lower than the previous year.

Pupil performance and progress are not consistent in all classes or year groups, with progress being weakest in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, senior leaders have developed more rigorous, but individually styled and constructed, systems for analysing school performance data and checking their accuracy. Information from these systems suggests that progress overall this term is improving in most year groups in reading and writing, and that gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils are now beginning to close. However, the school recognises that pupils' performance in mathematics is not as good, especially for the most able pupils who are not making good enough progress and are not achieving as well as they should. The school has invested in a new mathematics scheme that links to the new National Curriculum and has a greater emphasis on practical mathematics. It has been used since the autumn half term. It is too early to judge how it is helping pupils, particularly the more able, to gain a mastery of mathematical ideas or how

effective and consistent staff are at making sure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge will be filled.

Staff told me that pupils who are absent catch up with their missed work. Nevertheless, where pupils have been absent it is not evident from the pupils' books that the pupil has caught up with the missed work. In some classes there are too many blank pages in pupils' 'writing' and science books.

### **The quality of teaching**

In some classes the quality of teaching remains too inconsistent and, as a result, not enough teaching is unfailingly good or better. You and the leaders in the school have been aware of this through regular observations of lessons and when scrutinising pupils' books. Individual support has been instigated where teaching is less than good and this is beginning to make a positive difference to pupils' learning. While there are now examples of consistently stronger teaching throughout the school, more of this is needed to ensure that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress. Teachers are increasingly giving pupils sufficient opportunities to respond to their marking and supporting them to make the necessary improvements to their work. However, this approach is also marred by too much inconsistency leaving too many pupils, in particular classes, unclear as to how to progress and achieve in line with their capabilities.

Senior leaders have ensured that when pupils require a small group or one-to-one intervention to help with their learning that they do not miss English or mathematics lessons. This ensures that pupils are not missing any new learning in these subjects and are working with their classmates. The school is aware that some of these interventions are needed because pupils are still not being taught well enough in the first place.

The school has invested in mobile technological devices. This has increased pupils' access to a good range of reading books and mathematical activities, which the pupils greatly enjoy and take advantage of. The previous training of staff is beginning to pay dividends. Teaching assistants are being used more effectively to help pupils learn in lessons. Writing activities are more interesting for pupils and aligned with the new National Curriculum. There has also been an investment in more practical resources for the teaching of mathematics. This has supported the learning of the youngest pupils when joining the junior school, as some of them replicate those used in the local infant schools. These new resources are making the learning of mathematics more interesting and meaningful for all year groups.

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

Pupils continue to be polite, courteous and eager to learn. They said they liked having a new permanent, or in their words 'set', headteacher.

Pupils in lessons and the school council spoke with excitement about the new initiatives for reading that have begun this term. As a result, they reported that they read more frequently for pleasure and play mathematical learning games. They greatly appreciate the time staff spend in the homework club, particularly when the pupils do not have access to mobile electronic devices or the internet at home.

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

The school is not where it should be in terms of the length of time it has been judged to require special measures. Progress against the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 report has been too slow. However, under your leadership, the school has turned a corner and improvements have been consolidated from last term. You have quickly built strong relationships with everyone involved with the school, including other local headteachers. The leadership team is determined and tightly focused on ensuring that all pupils do as well as they possibly can. The new coordinator for special educational needs is experienced in the area and has a firm grasp of how to support pupils with differing needs. The new curriculum leader is working closely with staff to ensure consistency in lesson planning. She has also 'relaunched' the use of curriculum files for subject leaders, to help them review their work and demonstrate the breadth and balance of the curriculum. The leaders for English and mathematics continue to develop new resources, making learning more purposeful and fun, which is enhancing pupils' interest and learning.

Although the senior leaders have increased the frequency with which they individually analyse pupil performance, they do not yet have a sufficiently comprehensive view of the performance of the school. The milestones document that you are using has caused confusion amongst staff. You have needed to substitute it with your own documentation in order to report effectively to the governing body and project group. Using a clearer and common reporting format for evaluating pupil performance would enable your senior leaders to target strategies for accelerating pupil progress with greater precision. It would also ensure all governors and members of the project group are able to access the same performance information and use this more precisely to hold you and other school leaders to account.

At the time of the monitoring visit the school did not have a Raising Attainment Plan or improvement plan beyond December 2014. Although this is not required by the local authority, discussions with school leaders and governors revealed a lack of clarity with regard to the next steps on the journey out of special measures. As I reported following my last visit, the school needs a strong 'road map' out of special measures. Senior leaders, and in particular the governors, need to be crystal clear about how they will check the school's progress at key points along the way.

### **External support**

You explained how much you valued the help and support from the previous, interim headteacher, which is organised by the local authority. Because you worked so well

together before your official starting day at the school, you both managed to set a firm foundation for improvement this term.

Governors have received training for their new roles; more is planned. In order for the governing body to be able to demonstrate its own strategic capacity, the governors need to take on more of the work that the project group, chaired by a member of the local authority, is doing. The local authority needs to ensure that the school's data are accurate.