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Mrs Wendy Jacobs
Headteacher
Parish Church CofE Junior School
Warrington Road
Croydon
Surrey
CR0 4BH

Dear Mrs Jacobs

Special measures monitoring inspection of Parish Church CofE Junior School

Following my visit with Jeremy Loukes, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 17–18 June 2015, 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 2014. 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Other than the two newly qualified teachers appointed to start in September 2015, the school should not appoint any more 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 Croydon and the Diocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least typically good by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations for all groups of pupils
 - consistently set all groups of pupils challenging tasks
 - give pupils activities which interest them and help them to sustain concentration
 - check pupils' progress regularly in lessons and move them on quickly if they are not progressing rapidly enough
 - mark pupils' work in a way that shows them what to do next
 - give pupils enough chance to act on their comments and so improve their work.

- Raise pupils' achievement so that it is at least good by:
 - improving the rates of progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4 in particular
 - ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to write at length in different subjects and so increase their progress in writing
 - ensuring that the gaps between those pupils who are supported by additional funding and others close quickly.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - weaknesses in teaching are eliminated rapidly
 - there are efficient and accurate systems by which the school can measure the progress of pupils and groups of pupils
 - school improvement plans clearly focus on the need for pupils to make faster progress
 - planning for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs clearly includes the next intended steps in learning
 - subject leaders make a stronger contribution to raising standards in their areas of responsibility
 - leaders provide accurate and timely information to governors which gives a clearer analysis of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - governors are robust in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

An external review of governance to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17–18 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and a group of pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally with parents and carers. Discussions were held with members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE).

Context

Three teachers have left the school since the last inspection. Three more have joined with responsibilities for classes in Years 3, 4 and 5. The temporary deputy headteacher post was made substantive in April. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to join the school in September. Following a consultation, the school will change from voluntary-controlled to voluntary-aided status in September 2015. At that time, the school will change its name to The Minster Junior School.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Across all year groups, pupils have increased their rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The vast majority of pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds, are now making at least expected progress. In some cases, the progress of pupils has accelerated so that they are making more progress than expected. However, these improved rates of pupils' progress are uneven across subjects. Across all years, there are some groups of pupils who are making slightly less progress in mathematics than in other subjects.

Typically, pupils are making much more progress in writing than seen previously. As a result, pupils are more confident writers. They talk with greater confidence about the features of writing. Pupils can identify, use and apply a good range of literary devices in their work. Over time, this accelerated progress is beginning to ensure that children in all year groups are catching up on lost ground. However, there is still much to do. Pupils' attainment in writing, particularly for those in Years 5 and 6, is still well behind their attainment in reading and mathematics.

Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others are closing in some year groups but not all. Disadvantaged pupils are making more progress than others in Years 5 and 6. School data show that previous gaps between the attainment of these pupils and others have narrowed significantly. However, disadvantaged pupils are not making as much progress as others in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, gaps in attainment are beginning to emerge in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve so that typically, pupils are engaged in their learning. Often, teachers carefully question, listen and respond to pupils, challenging them to think and deepen their understanding. Teachers use an increasing range of activities to inspire pupils so that they feel ready to tackle a task. At its best, this ensures that there is good challenge for the majority of pupils. However, sometimes teaching does not lead to consistently high levels of engagement or challenge. Sometimes teachers' questioning is closed, which limits pupils' thinking. In these cases, some pupils do not move on quickly enough in their learning.

Support from teachers and teaching assistants has improved significantly. Teaching assistants are much clearer about the skills, knowledge and understanding pupils are developing in lessons. They use much more effective questioning to make sure pupils think harder about what they are learning. Where teachers' assessment is strongest, they are able to give pupils good individual support so that they feel ready to attempt a piece of work. However, some teaching does not use assessment effectively. Occasionally, pupils' weak attempts at tasks go unnoticed for too long in lessons and they do not receive the support they need quickly enough. Some teachers provide opportunities for pupils to mark each other's work and this often helps them to understand what they could do better. Occasionally, this is less effective because teachers do not ensure pupils focus enough on the skills or knowledge they are developing.

Teachers' feedback is beginning to have a greater impact on pupils' learning and progress. Some teachers' marking is insightful and carefully considered, helping pupils to deepen their understanding or apply skills more effectively. In such cases, pupils are keen to respond to teachers' guidance and they make good improvements to their work. This is still not the case in every class or every subject. Some feedback does not make pupils think enough about how well they have done. For example, some teachers indicate that objectives have been met without offering any insight about how well pupils have done or guiding them as to what could be better still.

The teaching of writing continues to improve. Pupils are making more progress because teachers are giving them better guidance about the characteristics of good writing. Pupils appreciate the activities that teachers use to help them to develop their ideas before they write. Some teachers ensure that pupils have more opportunities to write at length in other subjects. This practice is helping to accelerate the progress of some pupils but is not consistent across classes and year groups. Though all teachers use other subjects to allow pupils to develop and apply writing skills, pupils still have too few opportunities to write at length across a broad range of contexts.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improvements to teaching have ensured that pupils are developing good behaviour for learning. Pupils want to learn because they say that 'lessons are more fun'. This is helping to establish consistently good attitudes to learning. Very occasionally, where teaching is less engaging, a small number of pupils do not sustain these positive attitudes.

Pupils' attendance is improving. Leaders have significantly reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent. Pupils and their parents are much more aware of leaders' expectations of attendance because they have introduced more effective practices and approaches over the school year.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and other leaders have established a culture in which teachers want to improve their practice. Leaders continue to use a wide range of checks to identify the strengths of teaching as well as areas in need of development. Teachers are guided well because leaders focus on the most important areas for improvement. Consequently, leaders have an accurate and detailed understanding of the quality of teaching. Regular checks on teaching are closely linked with systems that track the progress of pupils so that the impact of improvements to teaching is clear. Leaders are making good use of stronger teaching to model good practice.

Leaders are ensuring that middle leadership continues to develop. Subject and year group leaders are more involved in checking the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils in their areas. They are able to identify pupils in need of support because tracking systems now provide a more detailed understanding of pupils' progress over time. Although some middle leaders are beginning to identify key priorities for their areas, this aspect of work remains underdeveloped. Middle leaders recognise the need for more formal and precise improvement plans that will ensure they are able to better evaluate the impact of their actions.

Leaders' support for key pupil groups is ensuring that pupils' rates of progress are increasing. Leaders have ensured that teachers and teaching assistants have more time to work together so that pupils with special educational needs are supported well in class. Further interventions for pupils with special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and those who are not making enough progress are always focused on their specific needs. These interventions are regularly evaluated and are helping to improve pupils' progress. However, leaders have identified that they need to be clearer about the impact they expect from these interventions and how quickly it should be achieved.

The governing body's response to the external evaluation of governance has ensured improvements continue. Monthly meetings ensure that governors have a much more detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Link governor roles have been established for some key areas of the school's work.

Governors use their regular visits to the school to inform their increased level of challenge to senior leaders. However, governors do not yet have a clear understanding of how effective middle leaders are. Governors speak with greater knowledge and confidence about the progress that pupils are making. They are developing a clearer understanding of the work that needs to be undertaken so that they are equally familiar with the impact of pupils' progress on attainment over time.

External support

The local authority and the SDBE hold leaders to account for pupils' progress through termly school progress review meetings. They have modelled rigorous challenge of leaders over time which is now increasingly evident in leaders' and governors' work.

The local authority and the SDBE are adapting their support for the school as leadership capacity develops. Rightly, they have a greater trust of leaders' checks on teaching and achievement and have focused their support on other areas leaders have identified. For example, the local authority has supported teachers with the moderation of pupils' writing. Support for teachers and teaching assistants has improved their provision for pupils, specifically those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Guidance from the SDBE has contributed to improvements to governance.

Leaders are also making effective use of links with a number of good or outstanding schools. Teachers are benefiting from seeing strong practice and have developed a wider range of teaching strategies as a result.