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15 July 2016

Ms Yvonne Jones  
Interim headteacher  
St Anthony's Free School  
93 Belle Vue Road  
Cinderford  
Gloucestershire  
GL14 2AA

Dear Ms Jones

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St Anthony's Free School**

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 June 2016 with Claire Mirams, Ofsted 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 to us during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

### **Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The school's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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 regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2015**

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - planning lessons which inspire and challenge pupils to achieve high standards and which build on what pupils already know and understand
  - ensuring pupils improve their work as a result of teachers' marking
  - checking that pupils understand the guidance they have been given and are learning from this advice
  - ensuring all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring that children in the early years are fully supported to develop their learning in mathematics and writing.
  
- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school by:
  - rapidly improving the quality of teaching of these subjects
  - ensuring that pupils are able to apply mathematical skills to develop their thinking and reasoning across the curriculum.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all teachers respond to training and advice by improving their practice
  - providing training to develop leaders' skills so that leaders play a leading role in driving improvements in teaching and learning, including by challenging weak practice
  - making sure leaders are skilled in using assessment information to set work which enables all pupils to make good progress
  - ensuring parents receive appropriate information about their child's achievement and progress
  - ensuring governors hold leaders to account for improving the school by checking the quality and accuracy of the information they receive about the school's performance.

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

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 June 2016**

### **Evidence**

We observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the seconded deputy headteacher and the designated safeguarding lead. We met with groups of pupils and spoke to others in and around the school. One inspector met parents on the playground and a recent parent survey was analysed. We held a discussion with the seconded deputy headteacher and three members of the senior leadership team. We met an external teaching and learning consultant and met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. We also had discussions with a national leader of education and a representative from the Department for Education, both of whom are currently supporting the school.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring visit two teachers have left the school and the headteacher has retired. One teacher has recently returned from maternity leave. Year 6 pupils have been taught by a number of temporary teachers. They are now being taught by a teacher who has been appointed on a fixed-term basis for next year. Shortly after the national tests were completed, the Year 5 class was combined with Year 6. Changes of teaching staff have been made in Year 3 and to the provision for pupils who need extra help. Several additional teaching assistants and two midday supervisors have been employed. A number of governors have left since the first monitoring visit but a national leader of governance has joined them to provide expert support and guidance. The number on roll has decreased from 111 to 88.

Shortly after the outcome of the first monitoring visit, the Department for Education started to find a sponsor for the school. A local primary school was approached to provide interim leadership until an appropriate sponsor was found. This arrangement broke down after three days. The preferred choice of sponsor for the school is the South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust (SGS) and the process to join this multi-academy trust is well under way. Since the end of February 2016, the SGS trust has seconded its executive headteacher from Forest High, the local SGS academy, to St Anthony's to provide interim leadership and management. The Gloucestershire Learning Alliance has also seconded a member of their leadership team to work with the interim headteacher as her deputy headteacher on a part-time basis. The Department for Education, in association with the SGS Trust, has appointed an experienced primary headteacher to join the school on a part-time basis from September. She will work in partnership with the current interim headteacher.

Numerous areas of the school building have been sealed off and are no longer in use. The school building was closed for a week in May because of asbestos issues.

Alternative accommodation was found for Year 6 so that they could take their national tests. Temporary arrangements were made for all other year groups. Plans are in place to relocate the school to either purpose-built or refurbished accommodation adjacent to the Forest High site.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupil outcomes have recently improved in Years 2 to 6, with accelerated progress noted in the work being produced by the pupils. This is particularly reflected in the outcomes of the most recent Year 6 national tests. Nevertheless, there is some way to go until the pupils make the progress they are capable of. This is especially so for those pupils who are entitled to additional government funding and boys, a proportion of whom do not do as well as the girls. Outcomes in the most recent screening check for phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) are disappointing. However, you have already analysed the information that this assessment has highlighted and are working on ways to support the pupils who need extra help with their phonics in Year 2. Outcomes for the current Reception class are poor with too many children not meeting a good level of development. Given that most of the children are articulate, bright youngsters who are eager to learn, they have not made the progress they are capable of.

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

The high-quality coaching and training that teachers are receiving has started to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Recent work completed by pupils shows that most pupils are starting to be challenged to think more deeply about what they are learning and use their skills to work out problems. Teachers in Years 2 to 6 are making much better use of the assessment information they collect and have started to be much clearer about what they want their pupils to learn. This is helping them stretch the most able pupils. For example, a group of the most able Year 6 pupils were working out a challenging problem together. They reasoned with each other and discussed the possible solutions they could come up with. However, the challenge to the most able is not a consistent feature throughout the school. Generally teachers use the school's agreed marking policy appropriately but they do not always check that the pupils understand what they have written in their books. This means that they do not consistently know what they have to do to improve their work.

Teaching in the Reception class remains a serious concern. Children are given activities to do which fail to extend key learning skills. Assessments are not used well enough to make sure that the work planned for them meets their needs. Although the most able tackle work on their own and create individual challenges, other children, especially those who speak English as an additional language or have special educational needs, fail to thrive academically. This is because they are either supported too much by an adult or left on their own for too long without any

teaching interventions. Despite the inadequacy of the outdoor area being highlighted at my last visit, it remains stark and unstimulating. It fails to inspire the children's language and communication skills, but also their creative and physical development.

You have accurately identified the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning for those pupils who have disabilities or special needs. Individual class teachers have very recently taken on responsibility for this and are using the assessment information well to prepare work that meets their needs and provides appropriate support when they are learning.

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

Despite all the staffing changes experienced over the past six months, pupils remain positive about their school. They are delighted with your arrival as interim headteacher and are pleased with the many changes you have made. Year 6 pupils speak very positively about their new teacher, who they feel has really helped them with their national tests. Although they were required to sit these tests in a new environment, they report that they had a great time at Forest High. Several pupils explained to me that the experience was 'made really nice and special for us'. Although initially disappointed, Year 6 pupils speak very positively about their recent merger with the Year 5 pupils, who they get on well with. They also like the move to their new classroom, which is much brighter and more welcoming than the previous one.

During our visit we noticed that pupils in Years 2 to 6 were engaged in their lessons and enjoying their learning. They discuss their work and make helpful suggestions to each other about how they can improve their learning. Although the most able children in Reception concentrate hard on their learning and work for long periods of time on their own, others in the class are restless, distracted and misbehave. This is because the learning fails to interest them and does not meet their needs.

The introduction of a breakfast club for those pupils who have difficulty getting to school on time, may be experiencing difficulties at home, or have difficulties with their learning, is already having a positive impact. Punctuality and attendance have improved and you note that they are gaining more confidence.

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

Following my last visit in December, it is clear that the effectiveness of leadership and management declined even further during January and February. On your arrival at the end of February as interim headteacher, you quickly identified that the safety of the pupils was your utmost priority. Unsafe areas of accommodation were taken out of use and you were very clear that only rooms which had routes to fire escapes were to be used. Loopholes in site security were immediately tackled and the unprotected information and communication technology equipment was disabled.

You rapidly discovered that there were significant gaps in staff knowledge and understanding of keeping children safe. You swiftly negotiated support from the designated safeguarding lead from Forest High to tackle this and staff undertook rigorous safeguarding training. This helped them recognise potential neglect and take appropriate action when concerns arose. More recently, staff have undertaken 'Prevent' training, which is a government programme to protect pupils from extremism and radicalisation. You and your designated safeguarding leader relentlessly ensure that safeguarding systems and procedures are robust and fully understood by the school community. Leaders carefully log and closely monitor any patterns of concern and contact external agencies when necessary. A governor responsible for safeguarding has been appointed and all governors receive regular updates. A local authority safeguarding audit has been completed and issues of concern noted and dealt with. These improvements have had a significant impact on ensuring that the pupils are being kept safe and secure.

You have wasted no time in establishing a strategic approach to school improvement. You have created a realistic and manageable middle leadership team who have a clear understanding of the part they need to play in the school's journey of improvement. Leaders have supported you in the creation of a well-crafted development plan and they know that they have a shared responsibility for improving teaching and learning and accelerating progress. You and your middle leaders have simplified the system used to track and check pupil progress and made sure that all teaching staff understand how to use it to plan lessons and target the needs of individual pupils.

The very recent support from the seconded deputy headteacher and an external consultant who specialises in coaching teachers has had a strong impact on the quality of teaching seen in pupils' books since they arrived. Middle leaders have adopted a focused approach to checking the way that teachers plan their lessons and the quality of learning in pupils' books. By making sure that the progress pupils are making is frequently checked and the information added to the tracking system and analysed carefully, teachers have a better understanding of how their lessons can be more tailored to meet individual needs.

Governors have welcomed the support and guidance they have received from the national adviser and found that the training events have helped them clarify their roles and responsibilities. They are very pleased with your headteacher reports, which are informative and enable them to hold you and the staff to account for the quality of teaching and learning and pupil outcomes. The chair of governors finds the regular meetings you have together very helpful because they keep him well informed about school improvement.

Parents are very pleased with the way that the school is currently being managed. They are very supportive of the changes that you have made; as one parent explained, 'it is a totally different school'. Parents have noticed that their children are

making better progress but understand that there is still a lot to do. Although you have improved the quality of the newsletters and annual pupil reports, parents still feel that more could be done to improve the communication between home and school. This is particularly in relation to the future of the school.

### **External support**

The SGS trust is providing very strong support by releasing you to the school as the interim headteacher. At the start of the summer term a national leader of education from the Gloucestershire Learning Alliance resumed involvement with the school and has been providing you with primary expertise. The secondment of one of their senior leaders to the role of part-time deputy headteacher is also helping you establish high-quality leadership skills and providing professional development for the teaching staff. An external teaching coach is working alongside teachers to model quality teaching and learning and provide advice to improve their practice. The Department for Education and the regional schools commissioner (RSC) is keeping a watchful eye on your school improvement journey and giving guidance and support where needed.