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Mandy Lloyd
Interim headteacher
St Anthony's School
93 Belle Vue Road
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Dear Mrs Lloyd

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Anthony's School

Following my visit with Janice Isaac, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 July 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 that 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 that pupils improve their work as a result of teachers' feedback
 - checking that pupils understand the guidance they have been given and are learning from this advice
 - ensuring that 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:
 - implementing rigorous systems consistently to check the quality of teaching and learning, 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 that parents receive appropriate information about their child's achievement and progress
 - ensuring that 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 4 July 2017

Evidence

Inspectors looked at the pupils' English, mathematics and topic work which had been completed during the current academic year. They scrutinised documents submitted by the school, including the most recent post-inspection action plan. Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, interim deputy headteacher, a senior teacher and two middle leaders. They also met pupils, parents and three governors. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with another governor and considered the results from the inspection questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

The school continues to suffer from significant staff changes. Four new governors have been appointed since my previous visit and there is recruitment underway for additional governors. The chair of the governing body has remained in post since the section 5 inspection in May 2015. The interim headteacher and interim deputy headteacher complete their temporary part-time contracts at the end of August 2017. A substantive headteacher has been appointed by governors to start in September 2017. There is no significant change to the number on roll. Thirteen pupils have left the school. Eleven have joined, all of whom speak English as an additional language (EAL). One quarter of pupils who now attend the school speak English as an additional language.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite your determined efforts as interim headteacher to improve the effectiveness of the school, its future remains uncertain, two years after being placed in special measures. At the time of the inspection in May 2015, governors were asked to ensure that they held leaders to account for improving the school. The very high turnover of governors over the past two years, coupled with frequent changes of leadership, has had a negative impact on the rate of improvement, which is too slow.

The school's action plan is appropriately aligned to the areas identified for improvement in the section 5 report two years ago. However, there is limited evaluation of the impact of the actions school leaders have taken. Frequent changes in staffing and on the governing body have hampered leaders' work to secure the rapid and sustained improvement required. Sponsorship for the school has not been secured.

During your part-time interim roles, you and your deputy have brought some much-needed stability to the leadership of the school. You have used your professional contacts well to recruit four newly appointed governors who have expertise in education. Since my previous visit in December 2016, you, as interim headteacher,

have worked with a governor to secure funding to rectify health and safety concerns and improve the learning environment.

You and your interim deputy headteacher have been doing the right things to support the school. You have ensured that teaching staff have received training in using a new assessment system and helped them to develop their skills by working with other schools. You are justifiably proud of the impressive improvements in the quality of the early years provision under your leadership. Your interim deputy headteacher has worked well to support middle leaders to develop a deeper understanding of their roles. As a result, middle leaders are now better placed to identify what needs to improve within their subject areas.

You and your deputy continue to challenge weak teaching and support teachers to improve. This has led to a high turnover of staff. Although you have maintained an appropriate level of staffing, the reliance on temporary teachers and staff mobility have hindered efforts to secure and sustain effective and consistent improvements to teaching and learning.

During my visit, you explained the significant amount of time you spend ensuring that pupils are kept safe in and around the school. This was supported by the documentation you shared with me. You and your interim deputy headteacher are quick to risk-assess any potential hazards and keep the pupils safe. Although you manage the constraints of the learning environment and lack of resources well, you are limited in your capacity to offer the pupils access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Most parents feel that their children are making progress and appreciate the way you have improved communication between home and school during your interim period at the school. However, some parents raised concerns to inspectors about the frequent staff turnover.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Improvements to teaching and learning in the early years, noted at the time of my previous monitoring inspection, continue to make a strong impact on children's progress in this key stage. Teaching staff use the information they gather from detailed assessments to plan activities that help the children make the next steps in their learning. This includes a wealth of opportunities for the children to apply their learning and explain their thinking.

However, this strong practice is not consistently reflected in other year groups, particularly in Years 1 to 4. Although you and your interim deputy headteacher have introduced systematic approaches to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in these year groups, the high mobility of staff has led to inconsistent teacher expectations. Despite this shortcoming having been highlighted as an area for improvement two years ago, and also noted as a weakness on two of my

previous monitoring visits, teachers are still not fully challenging pupils to deepen their understanding.

An analysis of pupils' books shows that this weakness applies especially for the most able pupils. They are not sufficiently able to apply their skills and broaden their knowledge. For example, work in mathematics books shows that the most able pupils too frequently repeat concepts that they have already grasped. This highlights an ineffective approach to assessing what pupils know, understand and can do. It also indicates where teachers are not planning learning effectively to meet pupils' needs.

You provide strong support for those pupils who are in the early stages of learning English. Following assessment on entry into school, you regularly check their progress. Your specialist language teaching assistant supports pupils well, both individually and in class, to develop their understanding of English. Teachers appreciate the specialist help they receive, such as with the translation of key vocabulary, to meet the needs of their pupils whose English is developing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Summaries from your regular 'drop-in' classroom observations show that there is still some inconsistency in pupils' attitudes to their learning. There is too much variation in pupils' presentation of their work and in how much pride they take in ensuring that their work is completed to a high standard. More needs to be done to help pupils take a more active interest and pride in their learning.

You explained that, since my previous visit, you have been managing some inappropriate and challenging behaviour from a small minority of pupils. You have tackled this by commissioning specialist support and, as a result of the strategies you have implemented, the number of anti-social incidents has decreased. However, there is still more work to be done to support those pupils who have difficulty controlling their own behaviour.

At the time of my last visit, I emphasised the importance of taking action to improve attendance rates. Your sharpened analysis of the attendance of specific groups of pupils has enabled you carefully to track those pupils who are persistently absent. You take decisive action to tackle non-attenders and work closely with outside agencies to support families in ensuring that their children come to school. Consequently, attendance is improving.

Outcomes for pupils

The improvements made to the early years provision during this academic year have had a significant impact on the progress made by the Reception children. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has markedly increased compared with last year. They use their phonics knowledge well

in their writing and use mathematical language accurately. This is the result of investment in training and resources, coupled with consistency in staffing.

During my previous visit, I acknowledged the legacy of poor phonics teaching and its impact on outcomes. Those pupils who failed to meet the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check last year successfully achieved this in Year 2. However, fewer than half of the current Year 1 pupils met the expected level. This is a disappointing outcome, given the introduction of a new systematic approach to teaching phonics and a revised assessment approach this academic year. It is a further consequence of staff changes and inconsistency in teaching. Pupils have not made sufficient progress during Year 1.

As a result of your investment in staff training and your careful monitoring of the consistency of approach, pupils have improved their handwriting. They now spell and punctuate with greater accuracy. Year 6 pupils have been assessed and moderated to meet age-related expectations. However, the work provided for inspection sampling indicates that pupils make limited use of their improved writing skills across a range of different subjects.

A recently introduced approach to teaching reading, supported with new resources, has not had time to make a significant impact on pupils' reading skills. Just over half of the Year 6 pupils met the standard expected for their age. Only five of the 12 pupils in Year 2 met age-related expectations for reading.

Mathematics outcomes are of particular concern. Only one quarter of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils met the expected level in the most recent national tests. This is also reflected in the mathematics work over time, which demonstrates that pupils, including the most able, are not able to think mathematically for themselves or to solve problems in different ways.

External support

The support you have brokered from local schools has contributed significantly to the success of the improvements to the early years. You have also made highly effective use of specialist EAL support, funded through a teaching and learning grant, and delivered by the Gloucester Learning Alliance. The alliance is also funding help for staff who require support with aspects of their teaching, including learning to teach a new age group. You have made good use of advice from a local authority English specialist to help staff plan writing activities.