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Mrs Julie Wardle
Acting Principal
Corpus Christi Catholic Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Wardle

Special measures monitoring inspection of Corpus Christi Catholic Primary Academy

Following my visit with Tracy Stone, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 26 and 27 February 2019, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2018. 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 action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the multi-academy company board, the

director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ann Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2018.

- Increase capacity of leadership and governance in order to:
 - monitor and evaluate teaching more rigorously to ensure that it is rapidly improving
 - hold teachers to account for the progress of different groups of learners, including boys, disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and most-able pupils
 - ensure that action plans have clear and measurable intended outcomes which indicate who is responsible for taking action and then monitoring and evaluating the plans
 - ensure that teachers' assessment is consistently accurate
 - secure strong leadership for SEN and the pupil premium
 - develop a curriculum that prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain
 - make sure that governors challenge and support leaders
 - engage more with external partners to provide robust and objective challenge
 - reduce absence and persistent absence further so that these are in line with the national averages
 - overhaul the school's website so that it meets the Department for Education (DfE) requirements for academies.
- Improve outcomes in key stages 1 and 2, especially in reading, and for boys, disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and most-able pupils by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently at least good
 - ensuring that teachers' planning focuses on meeting the needs of these pupils, so they can make rapid progress
 - ensuring that additional funding is appropriately targeted and evaluated to ensure that it is leading to rapid improvements in outcomes for pupils
 - providing pupils with the opportunity to develop their phonics skills in key stage 2 in order to acquire a higher standard of reading
 - extending activities for reasoning and problem-solving to enable most-able pupils to work in greater depth in mathematics
 - setting expectations for writing that are high across all subjects.
- Promote pupils' cultural development so that they have a better understanding of

their locality, the UK and the wider world by:

- extending their knowledge and understanding of other faiths and cultures
- ensuring that their understanding of the wider world is more balanced towards the modern age
- ensuring that cultural stereotypes are removed and consistently challenged.

An external review of governance and an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 February 2019

Evidence

The inspectors observed pupils' learning in English and mathematics lessons in key stages 1 and 2. Inspectors also observed teaching and learning in the early years foundation stage. The acting principal accompanied the lead inspector for some of the observations. The inspectors looked at pupils' work, including across a range of subjects in addition to English and mathematics, spoke to pupils about their learning and observed behaviour in lessons. The inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspectors heard a selection of pupils read from Years 1 and 3.

Meetings were held with the acting principal and deputy headteacher. Further meetings were held with members of the interim academy committee (IAC), a member of the school improvement board (SIB) and two representatives from the local authority. A meeting was held with a national leader for education (NLE) who is supporting the school, and a representative responsible for providing phonics support to the school.

The lead inspector evaluated a range of documents, including information about disadvantaged pupils and the pupil premium and attendance. Additional documentation, such as information about the monitoring of the quality of teaching, a local authority review, the school's action plan and safeguarding information and policies, was evaluated.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been changes to the leadership structure. The head of school has been appointed as the acting principal. The services of an NLE have been secured to support the school further. The deputy headteacher is now responsible for leading English. Two new teachers joined the school in January 2019.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting principal has revised the school development plans. They now identify precisely what needs to be done to tackle the remaining weaknesses across the school and the timescales in which the actions are to be achieved.

Leaders have developed detailed non-negotiable rules for teaching and learning. These set clear expectations for planning, teaching, assessment and feedback. Leaders use these to support their monitoring of the quality of teaching. Following the monitoring, they provide teachers with effective feedback to help them improve their teaching. However, leaders' monitoring activities are too broad and are not focused sharply enough on the key aspects of teaching that need further

development. Leaders have already identified this and are currently refining their monitoring activities to enable them to tackle the remaining weaknesses rapidly. However, it is clear that leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching have led to some considerable improvements in the quality of teaching since the last monitoring visit.

The school's current assessment and feedback policies and procedures do not help teachers to provide pupils with useful feedback to improve their learning. Leaders have recently identified this issue. They are already in the process of reviewing the assessment and feedback policies to ensure that they can be used effectively by teachers to support and develop pupils' learning.

The leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) remains a key area of concern. Due to staffing changes, there are some limitations in the capacity of leadership. While the provision for pupils with SEND is now being monitored more closely in class, there is further work to be done to ensure that teachers plan to meet the learning needs of pupils with SEND. Where teaching is effective, this is done very well and these pupils make strong progress. However, this is not consistent and, in some classes, pupils with SEND are unable to access the learning. As a result, they make weak progress. Leaders have plans in place to develop the leadership of SEND but the plans are at a very early stage and any impact is yet to be seen.

The deputy headteacher has worked alongside an adviser from the local authority to continue to develop the provision for disadvantaged pupils. She has rapidly gained a strong understanding of how to use the pupil premium funding more effectively to support these pupils. She has identified their barriers to learning, particularly some pupils' poor attendance. In response to this analysis, the deputy headteacher has prioritised actions to address the key issues very well. This work is now helping disadvantaged pupils to make better progress. Where teaching is effective, pupils make strong progress and are beginning to catch up with their peers. However, where weaknesses in teaching remain, they continue to underachieve.

The development of the curriculum is still in the early stages of planning. While the curriculum was replanned following the inspection in February 2018, it has not yet been developed further to ensure that sequences of learning develop pupils' knowledge and skills in a range of subjects from one year to the next. The acting principal has plans in place to develop the curriculum but they are yet to be implemented.

Leaders are successfully addressing the remaining issues with some persistent absence. Their close work with the education welfare officer is further enhancing the effectiveness of their actions. Leaders provide a high level of challenge to families where pupils continue to be absent from school for no good reason and this has resulted in improved attendance for some individuals. Leaders take all possible steps to improve attendance. Their work in this area has improved the overall

attendance across the school and has reduced persistent absence.

The IAC and SIB monitor the school's performance very closely. They have ensured that the acting principal is well supported to further accelerate the rate of school improvement. The IAC has a clear understanding of the developing strengths within the school. However, it also has a realistic understanding of the weaknesses which remain. Members effectively hold the school's leaders to account for school improvement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Phonics teaching is now consistently strong. All staff have high expectations of pupils and model letter sounds accurately. They provide pupils with opportunities to apply their phonics skills in reading and writing. Pupils' phonics books show a dramatic improvement in handwriting and presentation since the last monitoring visit.

However, while pupils' phonics skills are developed very well, the effective teaching of reading for meaning remains variable. There is a lack of a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, which limits the progress pupils make.

Overall, the quality of English teaching is improving. More teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. These teachers quickly spot gaps in pupils' prior knowledge and understanding and provide learning opportunities to enable pupils to close these gaps. Work in pupils' English books shows that, where teaching is effective, pupils make strong progress. This is particularly evident since January in lower key stage 2. However, there remain inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and this limits the progress they make. This is especially the case for the most able pupils.

Some mathematics teaching is very effective. Teachers consider pupils' individual learning needs carefully and match teaching precisely to these needs. In these classes, work in pupils' mathematics books shows that pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills are developed extremely well. This enables pupils, including the most able, pupils with SEND, boys and disadvantaged pupils, to make strong progress.

However, the quality of mathematics teaching across the school is variable. Where teaching is weak, pupils continue to underachieve. Teachers in these classes do not provide pupils with problem-solving and reasoning activities that are matched well enough to their learning needs. This results in work that is either too hard or too easy. Some teachers show little understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils make weak progress.

Children in the early years are happy and confident. They have positive

relationships with staff and behave well. However, there are weaknesses in the quality of teaching across the early years. Staff do not have a secure understanding of how to assess children's learning. As a result, they do not plan activities well enough to develop children's learning. Staff do not use questioning effectively to check what children can do, which does not enable them to provide further challenge and support where needed. This means that some children, especially the most able, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders and staff have created a warm and caring ethos across the school. Pupils continue to show great enthusiasm for learning. Their desire to learn has further increased since the last inspection, especially where there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching.

Pupils' understanding of democracy is well developed. They are able to consider and discuss political issues in a mature way. Work in their books shows that the teaching of the wider curriculum is becoming more consistent. Pupils have more opportunities to learn regularly about a range of different subjects. However, this is inconsistent across the school. Additionally, the lack of detailed curriculum planning means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures. Consequently, their understanding of these areas remains weak.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and have a clear overview of where pupils have fallen behind in their learning from their different starting points, especially in key stage 2. Pupils currently in key stage 1 have made strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics from the beginning of the year.

As a result of previous weak teaching, some pupils in lower key stage 2 are not achieving as well as they should. However, since January, these pupils have made strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Work in their books shows that the key gaps in their learning are being addressed successfully, which is helping them to catch up to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

However, in upper key stage 2, some pupils, particularly the most able, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, continue to underachieve in reading, writing and mathematics.

External support

The school receives external support from local authority advisers and a NLE. This support provides the school with highly effective challenge and guidance, which are helping leaders to improve leadership, the quality of teaching and learning, the effective use of the pupil premium funding and the early years provision. In addition

to this, the support from a specialist phonics adviser to develop the teaching of phonics has resulted in a dramatic improvement in this area. Phonics is now taught consistently well throughout Reception and key stage 1. As a result, standards in phonics are rising.

The school is also involved in a range of school improvement initiatives. Some of these initiatives have not been successful in helping the school to improve. In particular, they have had little or no impact on developing the quality of teaching and learning. The acting principal is in the process of disengaging from these initiatives.

Priority for further improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years by ensuring that staff:
 - accurately assess what children can do and use this information to plan appropriate activities to support and develop their learning
 - use questioning effectively to enable them to move children’s learning forward more rapidly
 - provide a higher level of challenge, especially for the most able children.