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Mrs Julie Wardle
Head of School
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 to your school on 28 to 29 November 2018, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2018.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to 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 the 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 with SEN and/or disabilities (SEND), 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 SEND 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 average
 - 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 with SEND 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 first monitoring inspection on 28 November 2018 to 29 November 2018

Evidence

The inspector observed pupils' learning in English and mathematics lessons in key stages 1 and 2. A learning walk was conducted in early years. The head of school, deputy headteacher and phonics leader accompanied the inspector for some of the observations. The inspector 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 inspector met formally with a group of pupils and observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime.

Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, deputy headteacher, and other school leaders, including those who are responsible for phonics, mathematics, safeguarding, the pupil premium, the curriculum and attendance. Further meetings were held with four members of the interim academy committee (IAC) and a representative from the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with a member of the school improvement board (SIB).

The inspector evaluated a range of documents, including the school's analysis of current pupils' progress, and information about disadvantaged pupils and the pupil premium, and attendance. Additional documentation, such as information about the monitoring of the quality of teaching, the school's action plan and self-evaluation, governors' minutes, safeguarding information and policies, was evaluated.

Context

There have been a number of staffing changes since the last inspection, especially in the leadership of the school. The executive headteacher arrangements are confirmed and the new head of school took up the post in September 2018. The deputy headteacher is now responsible for leading key stage 1. The governance structure has been fully established. An IAC is in place and is held to account by the SIB. Two new teachers joined the school in September 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The head of school took up her post in September 2018. She quickly established herself within the school and has developed positive working relationships with governors, the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher and staff within the school. She has galvanised the school's team and made some significant changes to begin to drive the necessary improvements across the school. However, the school improvement journey is still at an early stage. While it is clear that there are improvements in some aspects of the school's performance, such as the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1 and the teaching of phonics, some key weaknesses remain.

The school's action plan accurately identifies the overarching priorities for improvement. However, as a result of the significant changes since the last inspection, such as the changes in leadership, it is not meeting school improvement needs fully. Leaders are in the process of refining the school's action plan, so that it more accurately reflects the current school improvement targets and the timescales by which they should be achieved.

Owing to staffing changes, there are gaps in the middle leadership team, which is inhibiting progress in some areas, especially in developing the teaching of English and the provision for pupils with SEND. Some middle leaders are still relatively new to their posts and lack the experience to drive more rapid improvements in their subject areas. The head of school is providing support and professional development to enhance their skills. However, this support is at an early stage and the impact of it is yet to be seen.

The head of school, along with the deputy headteacher, have a very accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The head of school reviewed the performance of every member of staff following her appointment in September. New appraisal systems were introduced, and all teachers are now clear about leaders' expectations of the standards of teaching they should be achieving. The appraisal systems hold teachers to account effectively for their performance. The head of school has developed a detailed monitoring programme, which means that she and the deputy headteacher regularly check on the quality of teaching. They have identified where improvements have been made but importantly, where weaknesses remain. Carefully targeted support programmes are in place to help teachers improve their teaching skills. Since September, there have been notable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1, but improvements are not consistent across the school. Where significant concerns remain, leaders are taking appropriate actions to address the weaknesses identified.

The head of school and the deputy headteacher introduced a comprehensive assessment system to analyse pupils' achievements accurately. They quickly identified that historical assessments were unreliable and, in many cases, inaccurate. Consequently, current pupils' progress across the school appears poor. As a result of the revised assessment systems, the head of school and the deputy headteacher now have a much clearer understanding of current pupils' attainment and are tracking their progress carefully, identifying all pupils who have fallen behind in their learning. However, although staff's understanding of how to assess pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has improved, their use of the assessment systems is not yet securely embedded. Leaders are providing some staff with further support to ensure that all assessments are accurate and reflect precisely what pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics are.

The deputy headteacher is responsible for developing the effective use of the pupil premium funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. She has a clear

understanding of the improvement priorities in this area. Following the pupil premium review in the summer term, she quickly identified the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils and has begun to implement support to help these pupils make stronger progress. Where teaching is more effective, such as in key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with, or better than, other pupils. However, the improvements in the quality of teaching and support for disadvantaged pupils are not consistent across the school. Where weak teaching remains, disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve.

The executive headteacher and the head of school have identified the significant weaknesses in the special educational needs provision across the school. They acted rapidly to address some of the weaknesses and ensured that pupils with the most complex needs receive the right support. However, the accurate identification of pupils with SEND has only recently begun and improvements in the special educational needs provision are not yet evident. Consequently, provision for pupils with SEND remains ineffective.

The executive headteacher revised the curriculum maps for all year groups and these are now based on the current national curriculum. The curriculum maps show clearly how pupils' knowledge and skills should be developed in each year group. Topics have been designed around pupils' interests to engage them more in their learning, especially boys. The curriculum also ensures that pupils' cultural development appropriately reflects Britain and the wider world today, eliminating cultural stereotypes. For example, during Black History Month, the curriculum positively reflected a range of inspirational figures across history and celebrated the achievements and work of inspirational figures such as Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandela. However, curriculum changes have only recently been implemented and more work is needed to develop pupils' cultural understanding further to ensure that they are prepared well for life in modern Britain and the wider world.

Leaders and governors have sought support from a wide range of external partners. Some support, such as the development of phonics teaching, has already led to significant improvements across key stage 1. However, some of the new initiatives, such as the mathematics, reading and writing projects, have only recently been introduced and, therefore, the impact of them is yet to be seen. The head of school works closely with external advisers and responds quickly to suggestions and actions. As a result of this engagement with external advisers, senior leaders are beginning to drive more rapid improvements across the school.

Overall attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. While disadvantaged pupils' attendance remains below that of other pupils, it has shown a strong improvement and is continuing to rise. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced considerably, but continues to be above the national average. Leaders have taken robust actions to address this issue, such as refusing to authorise holidays. However, they recognise that there is still more to be done to ensure that some pupils do not miss too much school.

There is a clear accountability structure across the school. The SIB members are highly experienced and have a deep understanding of the current overall effectiveness of the school. Similarly, the IAC is also made up of experienced governors with a range of skills that equip them well to hold leaders to account for the school's improvement. They visit the school regularly to check that the school's leadership team is driving the necessary improvements within school to improve the quality of education. An external review of governance was recommended at the time of the previous inspection. This has not taken place as the previous governing body was disbanded and the IAC was put in place. This committee is held to account by the SIB. The school's website has been updated and now meets statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The phonics leader successfully introduced a new phonics scheme to the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have received high-quality training to help them deliver the new programme. As a result, the teaching of phonics has developed rapidly and is now securely effective across the school. This means that pupils are making stronger progress in phonics and reading in key stage 1. However, pupils' presentation in their phonics books is poor. Teachers do not address inaccurate letter formation or writing that is not on the lines. Teachers do not encourage pupils to show pride in their work and do not expect them to present their work neatly. This does not help pupils to improve their handwriting skills in phonics or in other subjects.

There have been several changes to the way pupils are taught. Some of these changes have led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, especially in key stage 1. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a detailed understanding of pupils' skills and abilities, especially disadvantaged pupils, in reading, writing and mathematics. They use the recently introduced assessment systems very effectively to plan to meet pupils' learning needs. This, along with their higher expectations of what pupils can do, are enabling pupils to make better progress and close the gaps in their previous learning. However, the improvements in the quality of teaching are not consistent across the school. Where teaching is weaker, teachers have a limited understanding of assessment and therefore do not match work to pupils' learning needs well enough. In some classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils, especially the most able pupils, can achieve remain too low. While teachers now know who the disadvantaged pupils are in their class, they do not understand and plan for their particular learning needs. Consequently, pupils in these classes make weak progress.

In some year groups, the teaching of mathematics has improved, and pupils are beginning to make stronger progress to enable them to achieve the standards of which they are capable. Where teaching is more effective, teachers model mathematical calculations carefully. They use questions to check pupils' understanding, and then provide pupils with further challenge to take their learning

forward at a pace. These teachers further deepen pupils' mathematical understanding through the effective use of mathematical reasoning activities. However, this is not consistent across the school. Some teachers provide pupils with too much help, which does not enable them to think for themselves and develop their learning. On occasions, incorrect mathematical language is used, which does not support pupils' learning. This means that some pupils continue to underachieve as a result of historic and current weak teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. They show that they are eager to learn and rise to the challenges presented to them. Pupils are well behaved and show a high level of respect to one another and all adults. In all classes, there is a very calm atmosphere and learning is not disrupted by inappropriate behaviour.

Pupils were very keen to share their work with the inspector and talked enthusiastically about the new topics they are learning about. Although there is limited evidence of the topics they have covered in their books, their work reflects the changes in the curriculum. For example, during Black History Month, pupils studied a range of important and inspirational people such as Malcolm X. Pupils show a strong understanding of why the people they studied are important and how they contributed to significant changes in history such as the abolition of slavery and the ending of segregation. Older pupils showed a very detailed understanding of Brexit and discussed reasons for and against leaving the European Union. Pupils also know who the Prime Minister is and the leader of the opposition. However, apart from pupils in Year 6, pupils lack a clear understanding of other faiths. The teaching of other faiths is not embedded across the school. This means that pupils' cultural development remains limited.

Outcomes for pupils

At the request of the executive headteacher and governors, the school's end of key stage 1 and early years assessments were moderated by the local authority in 2018. This was to ensure that the assessments were accurate. The proportions of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year in 2017 fell below the national average and continued to show a decline in 2018. The proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the phonics screening check in 2018 fell considerably and was some way below the national average.

Attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 also fell in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard and greater depth was below the national average in all three subjects. Attainment for boys was particularly weak, especially in reading and writing.

At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, pupils' progress in reading improved and was broadly in line with the national average. However, pupils' progress in writing was

well below the national average, with progress in mathematics also below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND were very poor. These pupils performed worse than all other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics and their progress was well below the national average.

The head of school and deputy headteacher have a clear and realistic overview of current pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups. They are using this information to target pupils who have fallen behind in their learning to ensure that they make accelerated progress to help them catch up to meet the standards they should. However, there is some way to go to ensure that all pupils are on track to meet their targets for the end of key stage 2.

External support

Leaders have successfully sought support from a wide range of external advisers to develop the quality of leadership and management and teaching. Reviews of the special educational needs provision and the use of the pupil premium were carried out in the summer term. The reports provide a detailed overview of the issues and the necessary actions that need to be taken to improve the weaknesses identified. Work on improving the use of the pupil premium funding has already begun, but improvements in the special educational needs provision are yet to be seen. Leaders secured funding to enable the school to be part of a mathematics project as well as a local authority reading and writing project. However, these initiatives are relatively new and have not led to any noticeable improvements at this time. The new phonics scheme is embedded and teaching in this area has strengthened considerably as a result of the effective use of the scheme.

Leaders have engaged particularly well with the local authority to utilise the expertise and support of the advisers to further improve the quality of teaching and leadership and management. A national leader for education provides support to leaders, particularly in monitoring the quality of teaching. The early years team is working with a range of settings to develop the early years provision. A primary religious education adviser from the diocese also works with the school.

The comprehensive and cohesive support programmes that are in place are providing a strong platform for the school's leaders and governors to drive further improvements across the school to enable pupils' outcomes to improve.