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22 October 2015

Mrs Fiona Todd
Executive Headteacher
Bunbury Aldersey Church of England Primary School
School Lane
Bunbury
Tarporley
Cheshire
CW6 9NR

Dear Mrs Todd,

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bunbury Aldersey Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Sheila Iwaskow, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Maureen Hints, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 30 September and 1 October 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 visit and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

This visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2015. 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:

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

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection on condition that they receive high-quality support from a trained mentor and are given regular opportunities to observe good to outstanding practice. This decision will be reviewed at the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Education Committee for The Haberdashers' Livery Company of London, the Director of Education for the Church of England Diocese of Chester, the Director of Children's

Services for Cheshire East and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Improve leadership and governance, particularly in the arrangements for safeguarding pupils, by:
 - ensuring all staff working in the school receive safeguarding training
 - ensuring all records of incidents, and especially those where external agencies are involved, detail clearly who has been spoken with, the content of the discussions and any recommendations, and the date and time of such conversations
 - ensuring that all risk assessments relating to the school, including those undertaken by external agencies, are kept in school so leaders can act upon them
 - ensuring pupils who report concerns are confident these will be addressed
 - building up and strengthening relationships with parents, including informing them of any incidents involving their children
 - ensuring the minutes of meetings of the governing body reflect clearly the discussions held, the challenges made and always focus on the impact of actions taken.

- Improve the behaviour of pupils at play and lunchtimes so it is as good as that usually displayed in the classroom by ensuring:
 - pupils are always aware of each other and of dangers while playing
 - adults check closely what pupils are doing in order to always spot where incidents occur.

- Strengthen further the good teaching and levels of pupils' achievement by ensuring:
 - teachers are more consistent in their use of information about pupils' learning to ensure progress is always as good as the best in the school
 - the marking of pupils' work is always as helpful to pupils' learning as the best in the school.

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 30 September and 1 October 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, examined the work in pupils' books and met with the executive headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, a group of teachers, the team of teaching assistants, groups of pupils and two representatives of the school's interim executive board (IEB). The lead inspector held telephone conversations with representatives of the Church of England Diocese of Chester and the local authority. Inspectors met with parents at the beginning and end of the day and took into account the 111 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

The focus of the inspection was to look specifically at the progress leaders and managers have made against each of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors in February 2015, as recorded in the inspection report.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection the headteacher has left the school. The local authority has secured the services of the executive headteacher until the end of the autumn term. The interim deputy headteacher has remained in post and will do so until the return of the permanent post-holder who is currently on maternity leave. A teacher joined the staff in September and is currently working in upper Key Stage 2. The school's governing body has been replaced, temporarily, by an IEB.

Outcomes for pupils

As a result of good-quality teaching, pupils' outcomes in 2015 remained as strong as they were the previous year. At Key Stage 1, for example, attainment was above 2014 national averages for all the core subjects and exceeded the school's previous year's figures in reading and writing. Attainment at Key Stage 2, similarly, was above 2014 national averages in all three core subjects. Furthermore, there was a notable increase in the progress that pupils made in reading in 2015 when compared the previous year.

All pupils, irrespective of their starting points, made the progress expected of them in 2015 and over half of the cohort did even better than this. However, there was a decline in pupils' progress in writing. This was particularly the case for boys and disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders are aware of this and plans are being implemented to improve the teaching of writing across the school. With the exception of writing, the Key Stage 2 gap, between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the school, narrowed in 2015.

In mathematics, pupils' progress in 2015 was above the 2014 national figure. Consequently, virtually all pupils, irrespective of their gender or starting points, made at least the progress expected of them.

Although the inspection took place early in the year, evidence in pupils' books and observations of teachers' classroom practice would suggest that pupils of all abilities continue to achieve well. These findings are consistent with those of the previous inspection.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers ensure that lessons are well organised and carefully structured. They follow firmly established classroom routines and consequently pupils understand what is expected of them and conduct themselves well. Where teaching is most effective, teachers carefully tailor activities to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils in the class. Teachers ensure that these activities challenge their pupils, fuelling pupils' enthusiasm and enabling them to learn well and deepen their understanding. Teaching of this quality was seen in one upper Key Stage 2 'space and shape' mathematics lesson. In this lesson, pupils were ostensibly carrying out the same task but different groups had been given different instructions. Pupils with a firm grasp of the concept were given minimal information and those whose understanding was less secure had more structured support. Consequently, each group had to think hard about what they were doing in order to arrive at a plausible solution to the problem and so deepen their understanding. However, this is not yet consistent practice across the school. Inspection evidence found that in some lessons a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is adopted with some activities not challenging enough for the most able and too difficult for weaker pupils. When this happens, the progress of both these groups is not as rapid as it could be.

The revised policy for marking pupils' work, recently introduced by senior leaders, is consistently applied by all staff and understood by the pupils. The use of the colours 'green for growth' and 'tickled pink' ensures that marking is informative; it clearly indicates to pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. Although it is still early in the year, persuasive evidence in pupils' mathematics books shows that the next steps teachers identify to move pupils' learning on increase the degree of challenge. This marking has a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able. However, teachers' marking in some English books lacks this degree of precision and the next steps do not make enough demands on pupils' thinking.

Teaching is rigorously and regularly monitored by senior leaders who use a range of evidence to determine the quality of professional practice across the school. Teachers spoken to by inspectors said that they found senior leaders' monitoring of their work supportive, affirming their strengths and identifying targets for improvement which are then followed up.

The roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants, in terms of their contribution to pupils' learning, have yet to be fully established. Consequently, their impact on pupils' progress is not being maximised.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inspectors' concerns with pupils' safety, which made a significant contribution to the judgement that the school required special measures, have been robustly addressed. The single central record of the checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children is compliant with statutory regulations. The school buildings and site are secure. Pupils can no longer access the school car park as a sturdy fence separates this area from the playground. All visitors to the school must report to reception when the school is in session, only accessing the school site through an entrance system controlled by staff.

The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and compliant with the Secretary of State's most recent guidance, including the school's duty under the Prevent strategy. All teachers and teaching assistants have undergone safeguarding training and are familiar with the document Keeping children safe in education, as required by the Department for Education's statutory guidance. The executive headteacher is the school's designated officer for child protection and a member of staff has been identified as being able to act in this capacity when the executive headteacher is not on the school site. Both these members of staff have received appropriate training to carry out their roles effectively. Child protection records and records of incidents are meticulously kept. As a result, when school staff deal with incidents involving children, the records of their actions are robust and contemporaneous with accurate documentary evidence that is able to withstand external scrutiny.

At the time of the previous monitoring visit, senior leaders had introduced much greater rigour to assessing the risks to staff and pupils associated with various school activities, but this practice was still in its infancy. Since then, however, risk assessment has become routine management practice and risk assessments are in place for school activities. The IEB monitors the school's risk assessments to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet requirements.

All staff have received training in emergency first aid and seven staff have gone on to become qualified first-aiders. Furthermore, each classroom is equipped with a first-aid kit. Consequently, school staff are well placed to deal with medical emergencies should they occur.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, senior leaders have introduced a revised behaviour management policy. The policy is applied consistently by staff and clearly understood by the pupils. As a result, the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour, particularly at breaks and lunchtime, are in decline. Senior leaders'

reorganisation of school play areas, for example providing a dedicated site for ball games, has also made a significant contribution to improvements in pupils' conduct. To further reinforce the school's Christian message of being kind to each other, the IEB has supported the introduction of an innovative approach to support pupils' development. Although it is relatively early days, pupils spoken to by inspectors said that this programme is already having a positive impact on their relationships with each other.

Pupils' conduct in class is exemplary, although compliant when teaching is less than inspiring. However, when teaching interests the pupils and is pitched at the right degree of challenge, pupils apply themselves well and have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They take pride in their appearance and treat school buildings and equipment with respect. This is evident on a school site that is well maintained and has no litter or graffiti.

Parents spoken to by inspectors at the beginning and end of the school day say that senior leaders are approachable and that they can confidently raise any concerns they have with them about their children.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher, ably supported by the interim deputy headteacher, is gracious in her dealings with others. Staff and parents alike attest to her approachability and willingness to listen, and then act on what she hears. However, her accommodating approach is underpinned by a steely resolve and in her relatively short time in post she has united the staff behind her vision to improve the school, and quickly.

Senior leaders have tackled robustly the areas for improvement identified by inspectors at the previous inspection, particularly in relation to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. As a result, parents can be confident that their children are safe in school and procedures for ensuring their safety are effective.

Senior leaders have comprehensively reviewed and refined systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress in the light of the changes to the National Curriculum. However, these systems are yet to be established and as a result it is too early to measure their impact.

As was the case at the previous inspection, pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is well promoted throughout the school. The spiritual dimension is fostered through acts of worship and opportunities afforded pupils for reflection. Pupils have a strong sense of justice, know the difference between right and wrong and are kind and respectful towards their teachers and each other. However, their awareness of other cultures and faiths that make up the rich tapestry of society is less in evidence.

Parents spoken to by inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the school's senior leadership. Home-school communications are much improved and parents feel that they now have a voice in school through the newly constituted parent council. The impact of this was described by one parent as, 'I feel listened to now.'

The IEB knows the school well. Its members' understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development has enabled them to support senior leaders in their drive to improve the school and hold them to account for the impact of their work. The school development plan is a comprehensive document. It provides an effective road map for senior leaders to follow on the school's journey to good and beyond.

External support

The local authority, in partnership with the Church of England Diocese of Chester, successfully brokered the appointments of the executive headteacher and interim deputy headteacher to stabilise senior leadership in the turbulence following the previous inspection. Senior leaders engaged the services of consultants to review the school's policy and procedures regarding health and safety. As a result of this review, an action plan was designed and then acted upon successfully so that the school's arrangements for securing the health and safety of all members of the school community are effective.

Despite the school taking effective action to address the areas for improvement at the last inspection, it remains in special measures because long-term arrangements for senior leadership and governance are not yet secure. There is no exit strategy in place for the IEB to hand on its responsibilities to a new governing body; consequently, the school's governance arrangements have yet to be finalised. The executive headteacher and interim deputy headteacher are not permanent appointments and a firm decision about the future status of the school has yet to be made by the local authority.