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Mrs Margaret Priggs
Interim headteacher
Sarratt Church of England Primary School
The Green
Sarratt
Rickmansworth
WD3 6AS

Dear Mrs Priggs

Special measures monitoring inspection of Sarratt Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Robert Bone, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19–20 May 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 inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which 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 which took place in October 2014. 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:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. A request to appoint one newly qualified teacher would be considered but must be presented to me, as the monitoring inspector.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire and the Board of Education for the Diocese of St Albans. This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014

Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by:

- raising teachers' expectations of what all pupils can achieve and providing greater challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils
- giving clear and precise explanations to pupils
- ensuring that all teachers use assessment and their prior knowledge of what pupils can do to accurately plan their next steps in learning
- give consistent and useful feedback to pupils so they know how to improve their work.

Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, including subject leaders, by:

- ensuring that all teachers with responsibilities for specific areas of the school's work, particularly English and mathematics, are given training so that they can monitor the quality of teaching and achievement in their areas or subjects and lead them effectively
- ensuring that systems for monitoring teachers' performance are implemented and that regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and achievement, so that action can be taken quickly to rectify any areas of weakness
- making sure that parents are given timely information about their child's progress and they are regularly informed about events in school
- making certain that the use of any additional funding, particularly for sport, is closely tracked for how well it is improving outcomes for all pupils.

Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:

- developing the strategic leadership of governors
- ensuring that governors hold school leaders to account for the continual improvement in standards
- making sure that governors communicate effectively, so that parents know who they are and what role governors play.

Improve behaviour and safety so it is consistently good at all times by:

- making sure that pupils develop good learning habits, so that time in lessons is not wasted
- making sure that all staff have appropriate training, including for First Aid, to ensure the safety of pupils.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 19–20 May 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work in all classes, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit in January, when the Interim Executive Board (IEB) was already in place, one other member of the teaching staff has left the school. The IEB is actively seeking to appoint a substantive head for the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Scrutiny of pupils' books by inspectors and moderation of marking and assessment by external partners show that teachers' assessments of progress and attainment are now accurate. Current information on pupils' progress produced by the school shows an improving picture in all year groups and for all groups of pupils. Information on the progress pupils are making is collected termly and discussed at pupil-progress meetings led by senior leaders. Underachievement is identified and action is taken to support vulnerable pupils. However, the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills caused by weaker teaching in the past are still being identified and these gaps are still slowing the progress of some students.

The quality of teaching

The interim headteacher has worked relentlessly to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Inspectors observed more challenge, especially for the most-able pupils, across a variety of year groups. For example, in Year 6, while pupils of all abilities were developing their skills in writing persuasively, the most-able pupils were challenged by their teacher to try using an ironic tone. In Year 1, children thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of using their phonic knowledge to sound out difficult 'nonsense words', such as 'phraitride' and 'shingrooland', achieving a high level of accuracy. However, on occasion, activities are still not pitched at the right level to engage and challenge all pupils. This is due to weaknesses in the subject knowledge of some teachers or a poor understanding of what the pupils already know. At these times, pupils' concentration lapses, they lose interest and so their progress halts.

Books are marked regularly and with increasing effect and show that pupils are now making more rapid progress. At their best, teachers' comments provoke thoughtful reflections from the pupils on their own learning and immediate improvements to their work. However, some comments are still too general or written in a way that does not make clear to the pupils what they need to do to improve. Other examples show that teachers give pupils helpful next steps in their learning, but these are not taken by the pupil and are not followed up by the teacher. As a result, the progress of these pupils stalls.

The school has recently introduced a new 'soft start' to the day where pupils can arrive at their classrooms at any point during a period of 10 minutes. They settle immediately to an early task, which often addresses an issue or misunderstanding that the teacher has identified from work completed the previous day. This revised arrangement creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere where pupils settle immediately to their learning.

All teaching staff have had training on how to make questioning effective. Both teachers and teaching assistants were observed using questions to challenge the understanding of pupils of all ages and make them think more deeply about their work. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, for example, precisely targeted questions enabled pupils to respond from their different levels of understanding and think rationally. However, on many occasions, teachers give unnecessarily complicated instructions to their classes, resulting in some pupils being confused about what they are to do. These pupils cannot start their work promptly, but have to wait for an adult to explain again what they have to do, slowing their learning. These delays sometimes deny the pupils time to complete the task to the best of their ability.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Staff training on improving behaviour for learning is having a positive impact and pupils are now developing good learning habits. Most concentrate well in lessons and when asked to work with partners or in groups do so successfully. When given clear direction, they are able to get on with tasks individually or with a learning partner, use the learning displays if they get stuck and only ask the teacher if really necessary.

Around the school, pupils behave with respect towards each other, their environment and adults.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim headteacher, robustly supported by the IEB, has set challenging targets to improve the quality of teaching and, therefore, pupils' progress. The performance

of teachers is monitored regularly and rigorously and underperformance is challenged. This action has led to some teachers leaving the school but many have risen to the challenge and improved their classroom practice.

This process of change is, at present, driven by the interim headteacher and the IEB rather than a fully effective senior leadership team. Subject leaders have now received some training. However, they are not yet taking advantage of improvements to the general quality of teaching to improve the level of challenge expected of pupils and so raise achievement in their areas of responsibility. Until recently, the main focus of improvement has been in mathematics and English. Pupils, themselves, identified less improvement in some other subjects. Newly appointed leaders in other subjects, such as art and science, are tasked to raise the profile of their subjects and create a lively curriculum for all pupils. As well as focusing on what is taught and available resources, these subject leaders have the challenge of improving their colleagues' practice to ensure that the quality of teaching at the school continues to rise.

The senior leadership team and the IEB have increased opportunities for parents to come into school to find out more about what their children are learning. Parents told inspectors that they feel more welcome in the school. For example, parents and their children were recently invited to a mathematics evening to explore ways in which parents could support the development of mathematical skills. The evening was well attended and well received.

External support

The interim headteacher spoke positively of the support provided by the local authority. The local authority has brokered a partnership with a local school that is providing coaching for new subject leaders. Teaching and learning advisers in the Early Years Foundation Stage, English and mathematics have confirmed the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. The local authority has also provided support for the newly qualified teachers, who have all developed their practice this year. All staff have had training on questioning and improving pupils' behaviour for learning. Inspectors saw the positive impact of this training. The local authority has also subsidised the salary of the interim headteacher.