

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Janice Taberner
Holy Family Catholic Primary School Platt Bridge
Wigan Street
Platt Bridge
Wigan
Lancashire
WN2 5JF

Dear Mrs Taberner

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School Platt Bridge

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 December 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 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 November 2016.

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

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

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 director of education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director

of children's services for Wigan. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2017.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - leaders have the highest ambitions for pupils of all levels of ability
 - leaders develop the skills to draw up and implement detailed plans that will ensure that standards throughout the school rise rapidly and that the progress made by all pupils is at least in line with national averages
 - all members of the governing body have the training and skills to be able to analyse the school's performance accurately and hold the headteacher and staff regularly and rigorously to account for improving standards for pupils of all abilities across the school
 - the pupil premium and sports funding is used effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all classes are taught by high-quality, permanent members of staff who will provide continuity and stability to pupils' learning
 - all staff receive regular and high-quality training that enables them to fulfil their roles effectively
 - demanding targets are set for each class and each group of pupils in every area of the curriculum and that progress towards those targets is checked regularly
 - pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified as soon as they arrive at the school, so that they can receive the support they need
 - all staff are trained to manage pupils' behaviour effectively.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years by ensuring that:
 - all staff and leaders are properly trained for their roles and receive the support they need to do their work effectively
 - resources are of high quality and that the indoor and outdoor areas are radically improved so that they stimulate learning for young children.
- Ensure that all pupils are safe and feel safe in school, by:
 - developing rigorous strategies to eliminate bullying and ensuring that these are implemented, and their impact monitored, regularly and frequently
 - ensuring that all checks of adults' suitability to work with children are kept up to date
 - ensuring that security policies are applied consistently.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

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 first monitoring inspection on 12 December 2017 to 13 December 2017

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, and scrutinised a wide range of documentation which included external monitoring reports and the school's own documentation. He met with the new executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the subject leaders for English and mathematics, as well as leaders for the early years and the special educational needs coordinator. He met with several other teaching staff. In addition, discussions were held with pupils, five members of the governing body and representatives from the Archdiocese of Liverpool and Wigan local authority. Her Majesty's Inspector also talked with a number of parents at the start and end of the school day and observed arrangements for pupils' entry and collection from the school. The inspector visited each classroom to observe pupils at work, to check their behaviour and to look at their books. Some of the classroom observations were done jointly with the executive headteacher. Her Majesty's Inspector also reviewed pupils' work in writing, mathematics, science, history and geography.

Context

Since the inspection in November 2016, the headteacher left the school. An interim headteacher took up post in January 2017 and left in November 2017. The headteacher of St Benedict's Catholic Primary School became the executive headteacher of Holy Family in November 2017. Prior to her appointment, she had provided support to the school as part of the local authority's consortium arrangements. There have been some changes to the staff at the school, particularly teaching assistants, due to a staffing restructure. There are a number of staff who are new to their subject leader roles. A new chair of the governing body and a number of other governors have been appointed by the archdiocese. The school was issued an academy order, but there are no firm plans in place for Holy Family to become an academy in the near future.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The pace of improvement at Holy Family has not been rapid enough to remedy the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. Poor leadership has led to confusion among staff and a series of false starts to school improvement. Leaders have stumbled to implement necessary changes to the curriculum and to the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, there are too few signs of recovery.

Gaps left in the wake of the previous leadership have left the school with little direction. There is no school improvement plan in place. Middle leaders have been left to formulate their own plans for their subjects with little guidance or support. This has led to a lack of continuity in the approach to curriculum development and

low staff morale.

Leaders have been too slow in commissioning reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium funding. Despite both reviews being a recommendation in the 2016 inspection report, neither has taken place. The strategies for the use of the school's physical education and sport premium and the pupil premium funding are out of date and not being used effectively.

However, the tide appears to be turning. Well-founded concerns about the accuracy of the information that they received has led governors to take positive and effective action to tackle the weaknesses in leadership and management. This has resulted in the recruitment of a new executive headteacher who has quickly taken positive action to remedy endemic weaknesses in leadership. Since her appointment three weeks ago, she has taken impressive actions to steady the ship.

The new headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher, has quickly won the trust and confidence of governors, staff and pupils. In a short space of time, she has brought hope for the future to staff who were previously unsupported and with low morale. There is now a renewed determination to embrace change at the school and there is a sense that staff are ready to rise to the challenge. There are early signs of the much needed ambition for pupils at the school.

Governors have made astute appointments to strengthen the governing body. They have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges that face the school. There is clear and appropriate challenge for leaders.

Immediate and effective action has been taken by the school, alongside support from the local authority and archdiocese, to rectify the shortcomings in safeguarding. The school's new entry system and gates have made pupils feel much more secure.

Safeguarding checks for staff meet statutory requirements and the new headteacher has ensured that a system of recording concerns regarding pupils' safety has been reinstated.

There is now a more stable staffing structure in place. Many staff require training for new roles. The role of middle leaders requires development so they can monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to aid school improvement.

The local authority's statement is fit for purpose but progress against the planned actions has been too slow. Consequently, there are still many unaddressed targets that remain relevant for the school. This is particularly true for the development of teaching and learning and the monitoring of pupils' progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Training has not resulted in the required improvements to teaching and learning because there has not been a coherent strategy to build consistency across year groups. Teachers have had opportunities to extend their teaching and leadership skills and to see examples of good practice, but this has been disjointed due to the lack of oversight by senior leaders. Leaders' checks on teaching and learning have been ineffective because staff have not received clear direction or feedback from these monitoring activities.

Pupils' learning falters due to a lack of focus and precision in teaching. In many year groups, teachers do not set the right level of challenge for different ability groups to build on what pupils already know. Leaders have lacked the ability to draw the curriculum together and effect positive changes to teaching and learning. The sequence of teaching in some year groups, as well as the consistency of progress across different year groups, is a key area for improvement. There are small pockets of good practice that need to become the norm across the school.

The support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is variable. New teaching assistant staff have not yet received the training that they need to cater for pupils' needs. This is largely due to the instability in leadership. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has very quickly grasped her area of responsibility and has a clear understanding of what needs to be done. She has received relevant, high-quality training, but has had little impact due to the short time she has been in role. There are some pockets of effective support and the SENCo is keen to develop staff skills.

In the early years, resources to support children's learning have only recently been improved. This signals a significant time lag in addressing the actions to improve the school that were left at the last inspection. It is also evidence of the urgency that the new executive headteacher has brought to the school. The areas for learning are not yet effectively focused because staff have not had sufficient time with the new resources to make the most of them. The outdoor area has some new equipment but is in need of further development to ensure that it is a bright and welcoming area for children in which to work and play.

Children respond well to adult-initiated activities in the early years. However, they are very dependent on adults to further their learning rather than exploring for themselves.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Staff have received training on promoting positive behaviour. This has had some success in reducing incidents of more serious misbehaviour. However, leaders have provided too little support or direction to ensure that pupils' behaviour is managed consistently well across different classes. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is still not

good enough and incidents of low-level disruption persist in some classes.

The new headteacher is taking robust and appropriate action when dealing with bullying and poor behaviour. The pupils who spoke with Her Majesty's Inspector appreciate the actions the new headteacher has recently taken to improve pupils' experience at school and ensure that learning is not interrupted by poor behaviour. This is contributing to pupils feeling safe in school.

Nursery children explore their environment well, displaying the behaviour of children who feel safe and want to learn. This is in direct contrast to the Reception class, where some children drift between activities with little purpose because they are unsure of the tasks or they are not engaged by adults.

Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The new headteacher has already established a system to tackle persistence absence and punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' progress remains below national expectations by the end of key stage 2 in reading and is significantly below in mathematics. Although still low, there have been improvements in the progress and standards pupils achieve in writing by the end of Year 6.

The present work in pupils' books contradicts this. There is better progress in pupils' mathematics books because mathematical reasoning and problem solving is more embedded. This good practice is particularly evident in lower key stage 2, where challenges for pupils extend their learning. However, writing progress is stagnant in most year groups. This is due to the lack of clarity in identifying the next steps in learning for different ability groups. Learning does not match pupils' next steps.

The standards achieved in reading and mathematics by pupils by the end of key stage 1 are much lower than average. In writing, a much lower than average proportion achieved age-related expectations. The progress pupils make in their books is poor and matches the published data.

Pupils' work in geography and history shows they acquire factual knowledge without developing any depth of understanding about the topics that they study. There is a lack of focus on geographical and historical skills development.

In the early years, more stable leadership has led to an increase in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year. This rose to around two thirds in 2017. The early years leader has been self-motivating in seeking improvements for the children in her care.

Most importantly, pupils are safe and they feel safe. With the appointment of the new headteacher, leaders and governors are championing pupils' needs above all

else. This is restoring pupils' pride and sense of belonging in the school. The pupils with whom Her Majesty's Inspector spoke like the new arrangements for pupils entering the school in the morning and being collected at the end of the school day. They say that they feel safe because there is a calmer entry to the school and they no longer feel threatened by the number of adults on the playground.

The time is now right for all stakeholders to back the child-centred leadership of the school so all are pulling in the right direction to improve outcomes for pupils.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support. Evidence shows that concerns were raised in May 2017 regarding the progress of the school. The local authority has worked well with the archdiocese and governors to ensure that the school is now in a position to improve.

Officers from the local authority are keeping abreast of the school's progress. They are meeting with leaders frequently. Local authority services, such as the early years team and support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, are being offered to improve teaching and learning. The partnership with St Benedict's is at an early stage, but staff have already been provided with support from the school. Its support and challenge is welcomed and valued by school staff and leaders.