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Wendy Jacobs
Headteacher
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Warrington Road
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Dear Mrs Jacobs

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Minster Junior School

Following my visit with Lou Anderson, Ofsted Inspector, and Avtar Sherri, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 24–25 November 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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:

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

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Croydon and the Diocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least typically good by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations for all groups of pupils
 - consistently set all groups of pupils challenging tasks
 - give pupils activities which interest them and help them to sustain concentration
 - check pupils' progress regularly in lessons and move them on quickly if they are not progressing rapidly enough
 - mark pupils' work in a way that shows them what to do next
 - give pupils enough chance to act on their comments and so improve their work.

- Raise pupils' achievement so that it is at least good by:
 - improving the rates of progress in Years 3 and 4 in particular
 - ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to write at length in different subjects and so increase their progress in writing
 - ensuring that the gaps between those pupils who are supported by additional funding and others close quickly.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - weaknesses in teaching are eliminated rapidly
 - there are efficient and accurate systems by which the school can measure the progress of pupils and groups of pupils
 - school improvement plans clearly focus on the need for pupils to make faster progress
 - planning for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs clearly includes the next intended steps in learning
 - subject leaders make a stronger contribution to raising standards in their areas of responsibility
 - leaders provide accurate and timely information to governors which gives a clearer analysis of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - governors are robust in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

An external review of governance to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 24–25 November 2015

Evidence

Inspectors made short visits to all classrooms to observe teaching and learning, some jointly with the headteacher. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's information about pupils' progress and records relating to safeguarding. Inspectors met with teachers, support staff, middle leaders and representatives of the Diocese of Southwark and of the local authority. Meetings were held with four members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair. Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and considered the views of a parent received by email. As well as meeting with a group of pupils formally, inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons and observed them at play during break and lunchtimes. A meeting was held with the headteacher of the partner school.

Context

The name of the school has changed from Parish Junior School to The Minster Junior School in recognition of the designation of Minster being conferred on the Croydon Minster. The status of the school has changed from voluntary controlled to voluntary aided. Three teachers left the school at the end of the last academic year. One teacher has left the school since the beginning of this academic year. This vacancy is being covered by the two deputy headteachers, one of whom teaches the class each morning, the other every afternoon. Three teachers started work at the school in September 2015. An assistant headteacher with responsibility for leading religious education and mathematics joined the staff in September 2015. A new school uniform was introduced at the start of the academic year.

Outcomes for pupils

In the 2015 national tests, Year 6 pupils' attainment was equal to the national average in reading, slightly below it in writing and well below it in mathematics. The proportions of pupils making expected progress was above average in reading, broadly similar to the average in writing and well below average in mathematics.

The school's information about current pupils' progress shows that pupils continue to make at least expected progress. In most year groups, pupils make more rapid progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. A number of well-targeted strategies have been put in place to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These include additional small-group teaching at lunchtime and after school. However, gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others remain. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making faster progress than those in Years 3 and 4. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making broadly similar progress to other pupils in school. The close attention given to improving the quality

of the teaching of writing last academic year was effective in raising pupils' attainment. The quality of writing continues to improve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have introduced a new system to track pupils' progress. This is to address the national changes to assessment, which include the removal of National Curriculum levels. Leaders have operated the previous and new systems alongside each other to ensure that the accuracy and integrity of the information about pupils' achievement is maintained. Teachers' assessments of pupils' writing were moderated by the local authority at the end of the last academic year and found to be accurate.

Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. Where teaching is most effective, teachers ask questions which challenge pupils to think more deeply about their learning. For example, in Year 6, pupils drew on their prior learning about World War II when responding to teachers' probing questions about the impact of propaganda posters on the reader. At its best, the feedback teachers record in pupils' workbooks gives clear guidance about how to improve a piece of work or requires pupils to attempt an additional challenge. Particularly effective comments ask pupils to develop their reasoning skills, for example by explaining why 0.2 is equal to one fifth. However, on occasions teachers do not insist that pupils respond to these comments. This limits their progress.

Changes have been made to the arrangements for the teaching of reading. All pupils have been assessed to ensure that teachers have an accurate understanding of their ability. New books have been purchased, with consideration having been given to the type of texts which appeal to boys in particular. For those pupils who are not yet fluent readers, teachers guide their choice of books so that they are well matched to pupils' reading ability. A structured approach to guided reading lessons provides teachers with more information about pupils' levels of understanding.

Where teachers use their time well during lessons, they identify skilfully which pupils need support, guidance or additional challenge, intervening as required. Sometimes teachers do not identify these needs quickly enough. In mathematics this occasionally results in pupils repeating numerous calculations of a similar nature when it is clear they understand the concept being studied.

Where teaching is weaker, pupils do not gain a thorough grasp of mathematical concepts before moving on to the next topic. This is because teachers do not always adjust their plans in the light of what pupils understand and can do. This prevents pupils from developing secure foundations on which to build in subsequent work.

Training for teaching assistants has led to them providing more effective support for pupils during lessons. The majority of support is now provided within the classroom. Teaching assistants judge their level of intervention well, enabling pupils to develop

confidence and independence, and to gain a good understanding of the lesson content. The focus of teaching assistants' work has moved from ensuring that pupils complete tasks to making sure that pupils understand what they are learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are keen to learn and in most cases engage in their learning with enthusiasm. The curriculum has been reviewed so that it has a greater focus on engaging pupils' interest. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning since the beginning of the academic year. Year 4 pupils are looking forward to selling the potions they have created at the Christmas fair. They have enjoyed designing labels and adverts, along with writing the scripts which they hope will persuade customers to buy their products.

Pupils get on well together, those from different backgrounds and with different beliefs engaging respectfully. Pupils cooperate well on the playground, sharing equipment and behaving responsibly. Pupil Advocates wear their blazers with pride, taking their roles of responsibility seriously.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has taken decisive action to minimise the disruption to pupils' learning in response to unplanned staff departures and in the light of the challenge to recruit teachers. An assistant headteacher appointed to lead mathematics has increased the school's capacity to improve pupils' outcomes in this subject. She has brought clear direction and a good understanding of the priorities needed to improve the quality of teaching of mathematics. Senior and middle leaders are increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. They regularly check the impact of teaching by looking closely at pupils' workbooks. They visit lessons to check that school policies are being carried out effectively. However, the records of these visits sometimes focus too much on what the teacher does rather than its impact on pupils' learning. The headteacher has recently brokered a partnership with the headteacher of a school graded outstanding at its last inspection, in order to provide additional leadership support. Parents spoken to during the inspection value the information they have received about the teaching of mathematics and the methods pupils are taught in school. They add that they would appreciate further guidance about how they can best support their children's learning at home.

Governors have an accurate picture of the school's progress, including an awareness of pupils' progress in each year group and of the quality of teaching. Their monthly governing body meetings, combined with regular visits to the school, ensure that governors' discussions and actions are based on up-to-date information.

External support

Local authority and Diocesan representatives work closely together to support the school. They carried out a review of teaching and learning jointly with school leaders in October 2015. As a result, changes have been made to the organisation of the teaching of reading and of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Year 3 pupils now consolidate their phonics knowledge and skills through discreet weekly phonics lessons. The local authority continues to provide support for the school through its Croydon Improvement Challenge programme. Training for middle leaders by a local authority officer has ensured that they focus on the impact of their actions rather than simply carrying out tasks.