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23 October 2023

Mary Lynch
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lynch

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 3 and 4 October 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require special measures following the graded (section 5) inspection that took place in November and December 2022.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the governing body the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, reviewed examples of pupils' work, and spoke to staff and pupils. In addition, I reviewed a range of documents relating to school improvement and safeguarding procedures. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

The Oratory Roman Catholic Primary School remains inadequate and requires special measures. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all staff share high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the previous inspection, the school has been through a period of significant instability. Over the past year, the vast majority of teachers and teaching assistants left, and it was a challenge to replace them. Since the summer term, staffing has been more stable. However, this has meant that significant time has been lost in tackling the issues identified. Despite this, leaders have created a unified and harmonious staff team. Staff are proud to work at The Oratory and are passionate about improving the school. Staff feel valued and say that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Before your appointment as executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher led the school as acting headteacher. While staff knew what needed to improve, there was a significant lack of leadership capacity. Governors were slow to act to ensure that the right support was in place and, as a result, progress stalled. However, in the short time since your appointment, you have identified urgent issues for improvement and are putting plans in place to address these shortcomings.

In the previous report, it was identified that the school was not teaching a broad range of subjects and therefore the curriculum was narrowed. The school rectified this quickly. Governors chose a curriculum for the school to follow. Support and training were given to implement this new curriculum. However, while the curriculum was broad and balanced, the pupils did not have secure enough prior knowledge to access the learning. This meant that pupils did not have an understanding of the essential knowledge to build new learning on. You recognise this and are beginning to refine the curriculum to ensure that the key knowledge and skills are clear, so teachers can ensure gaps are addressed and new learning is built on secure foundations.

Subject leaders are new to roll and have not yet received training to be able to carry out their roles effectively enough. However, they are determined to develop their subject's curriculum.

After reading was identified as an area to strengthen, leaders acted quickly to ensure a phonics scheme was in place. However, due to staffing changes, the training did not happen quickly enough. When the school began to implement the new scheme, it was not done with the fidelity that was needed. Currently, although the teaching of phonics does follow the school's chosen approach, inconsistencies in the teaching of the scheme remain.

The curriculum in the early years has not been implemented effectively. Expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. Routines have not been embedded, and as a result, children do not behave or learn well enough.

The behaviour of pupils in the school is not as strong as it was. You acknowledge that this has been hard to manage, due to the high level of staff turnover that has led to inconsistent behaviour management. However, leaders have identified this as a priority and have already begun to raise the expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct.

Despite staffing changes, leaders have ensured that their focus on safeguarding has never wavered. Safeguarding was effective at the previous inspection, and it continues to be so. High-quality training for all staff across the school has ensured that all staff know and fully understand their safeguarding duties.

Governors are passionate and care deeply about the school and the community that it serves. However, they did not act quickly enough to ensure support was put in place to address the weaknesses. It has taken too long to strengthen capacity of leadership across the school. However, with your recent appointment and the support from the multi-academy company, governors are confident that the pace of change will improve.

The school's improvement plan identified the key areas for improvement. However, the plan is not precise enough. You have recognised this and are reviewing this with urgency.

The school appreciates external support but found that at times the support was not as effective as it could be in supporting leaders to move the school forward. Some messages were contradictory and did not support leaders to focus on the right things. However, you are now working with a multi-academy company and the diocese, and there is a renewed vigour so as to ensure that the school improves quickly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Birmingham, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Eve Morris
His Majesty's Inspector