

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Direct email: Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com

15 November 2010

Ms Kerri Burns
Headteacher
Pells Church of England Primary School
Landport Road
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2SU

Dear Ms Burns

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pells Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3–4 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Diocesan Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Raise achievement and standards, and improve the quality of teaching and learning, by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and recorded, and this information used to:
 - monitor how well pupils are doing
 - plan the next steps in learning for pupils of different ages and abilities, so that all are appropriately challenged, especially the more able.
- Develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards.

Special measures: monitoring of Pells Church of England Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 3–4 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and the executive headteacher, other staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

At the start of this term the number of classes fell from five to four after a drop in pupil numbers over the last year. This has now stabilised. The school continues to be supported by an executive headteacher for up to three days per week. The advanced skills teacher, who provided support in the Early Years Foundation Stage last term, has been appointed as the full-time teacher of that class as well as deputy headteacher and coordinator for mathematics. A new member of staff has replaced the long-term supply cover in the Year 1/2 class and has taken over the coordination of English. Long-term supply arrangements, involving a teacher who worked at the school last term, remain in place in the Year 5/6 class, after the person appointed to that post was unable to take it up. A member of staff has stepped down from class teaching to become coordinator for special educational needs. Four new support staff have been appointed, mainly to work with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school also has a new chair of governors, after the vice chair was elected to the role following a period as acting chair.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Achievement continues to improve and pupils are building their knowledge and understanding more securely. Statutory assessments in the summer showed some gains, for example in older pupils' writing and younger pupils' mathematics. However, progress remains inconsistent overall. Gaps in prior learning still need to be addressed to ensure pupils reach the expected attainment levels. Weaknesses in basic literacy skills remain a barrier to progress. Speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped, making it difficult for pupils to articulate and develop their ideas. Weaknesses in reading and writing hinder them in accessing learning and recording their ideas. Rapidly improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is establishing a firmer basis for learning. At this age, children approach their learning with great enthusiasm because of the good start they now make in this class.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The atmosphere for learning is positive in most lessons and the school is orderly during break and lunchtimes. Most pupils behave well and want to learn. Routines

for learning and expectations for good behaviour are becoming the norm from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. Relationships between pupils are mainly good, so they play well together and share equipment. Behaviour in lessons deteriorates only when learning is not engaging enough. This is particularly evident among older pupils. As a consequence, a significant minority say they do not look forward to school, even though it is a calmer place to be. Attendance has fallen since the last inspection. Overall, it is below that in similar schools, with more pupils than usual missing school regularly. This compounds their previous weak achievement by missing further opportunities to learn and make progress.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching has continued to improve, notably in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Here, skilled classroom delivery means learning is tailored well to individual children's needs by staff working as a team. The learning environment has also been improved, with the indoor area being particularly stimulating. For all pupils, the assessment and tracking of their attainment has improved markedly. Teachers are making much better use of this information to plan their lessons so that pupils can meet their challenging targets. Learning is purposeful when it involves multi-sensory experiences. This is the key feature of the Early Years Foundation Stage which enables children to retain and build on their learning. Progress is slower where activities do not capture pupils' attention in ways which acknowledge their differing needs, for example when sitting and listening for too long, or when learning is abstract rather than practical. Teachers are rightly helping pupils to become more involved in their own learning by discussing success criteria with them. When well managed, this helps develop their speaking and listening skills well. However, some discussions are overly extended, generating frustration for pupils by delaying their engagement in learning. Marking is regular in English and mathematics, with greater expectation that pupils will respond to it. However, there is too little reference to targets and too few opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress. As a result, pupils' awareness of their targets remains patchy.

Pupils respond well to new curriculum themes; for example, Year 5/6 pupils were keen to show their topic folders on 'heroes'. Some opportunities are missed to adapt the curriculum structure sufficiently well to support pupils' learning. For example, guided reading might usefully be linked to subsequent literacy work to sustain the flow of learning.

The coordinator for special educational needs has sustained the progress made in enhancing provision. Improvements in the tracking of all pupils' attainment underpin better support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional adult helpers are increasingly effective in whole-class and withdrawal activities. As a result, pupils with statements of special educational needs participate more fully in class activities. Work with outside agencies continues to strengthen. The school works hard to care for pupils, including those whose circumstances make them

vulnerable. There is increasing engagement of parents and carers in their children's education. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage they are encouraged to record 'wow' moments observed at home for inclusion in their children's progress records. In the Year 3/4 class, pupils were justifiably proud of models made at home as part of a 'Narnia' theme. Falling attendance has been identified by the school as a concern. Work is underway with families where pupils' attendance is low. Nevertheless, about one in ten pupils were absent during this inspection.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and recorded, and this information used to monitor their progress and plan challenging next steps in learning for all, especially the more able – satisfactory
- Develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There have been further advances in the capacity of the school leadership to improve provision. The executive headteacher gives strong support. The deputy headteacher has settled in and is playing an increasingly useful role. Strategic planning focuses on the areas needing improvement and now includes more measurable short-term check points toward long-term goals. However, this is not consistently clear for all actions and some of the goals cited are not linked closely enough to outcomes for pupils. Monitoring the quality of provision is largely accurate. Lesson observations refer more usefully to areas previously identified for improvement. Nevertheless, there is too little focus on the impact on learning when judging the quality of teaching and defining what needs to be improved. Subject leadership in English and mathematics has moved forward well. Working with the headteacher and executive headteacher, the newly appointed coordinators are taking responsibility for development planning. They are increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of provision and leading staff development. Professional development for subject leadership, and other areas such as leadership of provision for special educational needs, is well planned. The governors are working closely with school leaders and receive a good flow of information. They are well focused on securing better achievement for pupils and are beginning to use data independently to check whether this is happening.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards – good.

External support

Local authority support has been an important feature in accelerating progress after an initially slow start. Provision is tailored appropriately to meet the school's needs, especially in fostering its capacity to improve itself. Monitoring and feedback to the school is detailed and mainly accurate, albeit with a need to check the impact of teaching on learning more closely.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the impact of work to ensure all pupils attend regularly by helping parents and carers understand the impact of poor attendance on their children's achievement and life chances.