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10 November 2010

Mr N McDonough
Hurst Green Church of England Primary School
Hurst Green
Etchingham
East Sussex
TN19 7PN

Dear Mr McDonough

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. 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.

One Newly Qualified Teacher may be appointed to work with any year group.

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 the governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- **Improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise achievement by:**
 - embedding the use of assessment information to set accurate, understandable and challenging targets for all pupils
 - giving pupils clear guidance during lessons and through marking of work so that they know how to improve.

- **Improve opportunities for learning by all pupils by:**
 - creating a common and shared understanding of the school's curriculum, ensuring lesson plans are always focused on what pupils need to learn next
 - taking pupils' interests into account and adapting teachers' medium-term and daily planning accordingly.

- **Ensure that leaders and managers accelerate change by:**
 - evaluating the school's performance with greater rigour and planning carefully for improvement
 - monitoring and evaluating all initiatives so that effective practice becomes embedded and inconsistencies are eliminated
 - giving subject leaders opportunities to develop teaching and learning in their subjects so they can provide targeted support for staff.

- **Ensure that all safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and that safety testing records are immediately updated.**

Special measures: monitoring of Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 20–21 October 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed seven lessons, scrutinised documents and samples of pupils' work, had discussions with teachers and pupils and met with the acting headteacher, the chair of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the Diocese of Chichester.

Context

Since the Ofsted inspection on 12 and 13 May 2010, an acting headteacher has been appointed and there have been changes in the membership and structure of the governing body. Over the October break, the school will be moving into new buildings on an adjacent site, re-opening on 3 November.

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

Provisional results for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2010 were higher than county and national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Provisional results for tests in English and mathematics, at the end of Key Stage 2, fell below the predictions expected. Attainment is now beginning to rise. The school's analysis of data shows that progress in English and mathematics across each key stage is now satisfactory.

Training of governors and staff in how to use information about pupils' attainment and progress has led to the setting of more realistic and challenging targets for pupils and a clearer view of patterns of progress. The acting headteacher has played a key role in this, strongly supported by the local authority Effectiveness Manager, who is also the School Improvement Partner. Teachers understand how to use assessment to promote learning but good practice is not yet thoroughly embedded.

Pupils are keen to meet expectations, enjoy learning and support each other happily through partner and group work. They welcome opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through activities in class and through their response to the questions and guidance that are increasingly a feature of teachers' marking of work.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection in the areas for improvement:

- improving teaching and learning, and raising achievement – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

These aspects were not an inspection focus; however, behaviour in class and around the school was always good and pupils listed 'feeling safe' as a key feature of their Hurst Green experience. They develop skills that will serve them well in later life.

The effectiveness of provision

Previous lack of coherence and progression in the curriculum is being tackled positively, with vigorous support from the local authority. While topics much enjoyed by pupils have been maintained, these are now more securely supported by a framework that ensures a better coverage of the National Curriculum and the progressive development of key skills. Alongside this is the development of more systematic analysis and use of information about pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers and support staff have responded well to recent training but best practice is not yet securely embedded. Teachers have good questioning skills that encourage pupils to think more critically and independently, but there is a tendency to fall back on simple 'Yes/No' approaches if open questions do not immediately prompt the hoped-for response. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, working especially well with those who need additional support, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The most able pupils are not consistently challenged, although good examples were observed of these pupils taking the lead for parts of their class's learning. They value such opportunities.

Lesson plans are sensibly structured to lead pupils from one step of learning to the next, and set out clearly what it is intended pupils should learn. Opportunities to check and consolidate learning are routinely built in. While this combination of structure and practice is strengthening provision, teachers do not always have the confidence to adjust their lesson planning to match the pace and security of their pupils' learning. Well-planned cross-curricular work reinforces pupils' literacy and problem-solving skills.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improving opportunities for learning by all pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last section 5 inspection, there has been rigorous and realistic self-evaluation by the strengthened and effectively led governing body and by the acting headteacher. There is firm and sustained support from the local authority and the diocese. An ambitious but manageable three-strand action plan is in place and being effectively implemented. This includes curriculum planning, training of all staff and governors in how to interpret and apply data, productive monitoring of teaching and

learning and targeted coaching for teachers and support staff. The impact can be seen in rising attainment, more effective teaching strategies, a well-constructed curriculum and coordinated care, guidance and support. The confidence of parents and carers is being rebuilt, partly through regular communication. This is evident in the weekly newsletters and the daily presence of the acting headteacher in the playground, when parents and carers deliver or collect their children.

Supported by the School Improvement Partner and local authority consultants, as well as by the acting headteacher, subject coordinators are developing stronger leadership skills. They recognise that more remains to be done to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and confidence to work with all curriculum strands confidently and effectively.

Over recent months, all safeguarding and health and safety provision has been reviewed and updated. Training for governors and all staff has been put in place. A detailed programme of review, renewal and repair has followed an external audit of health and safety. All policies relating to safeguarding – including anti-bullying, equalities, child protection and attendance – have been updated. At the time of this monitoring visit, these policies were still being reviewed by governors, with full implementation planned for early November.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection in the areas for improvement:

- ensuring that leaders and managers accelerate change – satisfactory
- ensuring that all safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and that safety testing records are immediately updated – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action is very well constructed, with appropriate and manageable action points, realistic time targets and outstanding clarity about roles, lines of accountability and resources.

Guidance from the School Improvement Partner and local authority consultants has had a major and constructive impact on teaching, curriculum development and the capacity of senior and middle leaders to tackle issues identified at the last inspection. Further support has come from the diocese, especially in shaping and embedding a strong and positive ethos.

Priorities for further improvement

- The key issues identified in the May 2010 Ofsted report continue to be priorities for further improvement.