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Monday 8 November 2010

Mrs H Pritchard
St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School
Stoney Lane
Kidderminster
Worcestershire
DY10 2LX

Dear Mrs Pritchard

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Thursday 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 Worcestershire and the Director of Education for the Worcester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve standards and achievement by the end of Year 6 by ensuring that teachers expect more of the pupils and plan work that is pitched at the right level for them all.
- Improve attendance by working more effectively with parents and pupils.
- Ensure that the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is responsive to their needs and includes sufficient opportunities for them to practice and improve basic skills in literacy and numeracy by using them in different subjects.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels make better use of information about how well pupils are doing in Years 3 to 6 to identify and tackle underachievement as soon as it arises.

Special measures: monitoring of St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on Thursday 4 and Friday 5 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders. In addition, the inspector discussed progress since the last monitoring visit with the Chair of the Governing Body, individual governors, groups of pupils, parents, teachers and teaching assistants. As part of the visit, the procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were checked and found to be in order.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there has been one change of teacher, the local authority seconding a teacher for a year as a replacement. Pupil numbers have grown, with one leaving and ten joining, bringing the number on roll up to 181.

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

Data shows that the substantial improvements in attainment and individual achievement are set to continue. While attainment in Year 6 remains low, the gap with national standards has narrowed dramatically. In the current Year 4, the first Key Stage 2 cohort to have started the key stage since the school was placed in special measures pupils are performing in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are monitored effectively and are making progress in line with their classmates. Behaviour has improved as a result of the implementation of the recently revised policy and behaviour tracker procedures. Elsewhere in the school there is a similar pattern of rising attainment individual achievement. This is because all teachers are now far more confident in using the range of effective data and use it to plan, so that work is now at the right level for all learners.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve standards and achievement by the end of Year 6 by ensuring that teachers expect more of the pupils and plan work that is pitched at the right level for them all – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

There has been a significant increase in parental involvement which is central to the improved attendance and punctuality over the past 12 months. Over 70% of parents attended the most recent parents' evening, a large increase.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance by working more effectively with parents and pupils – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is now at least good, with some outstanding. Teachers make effective use of the school's data to plan and track progress made by every pupil. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils who know the levels at which they are working and how to move to the next step. Assessment follows the clear and developmental guidelines set out in the recently revised marking policy, supporting effective learning. Teaching assistants and parent volunteers in class help to ensure that individual needs are addressed.

The curriculum provides many opportunities to enhance literacy and numeracy skills and is responsive to pupils' needs and interests. Raising their esteem and supporting independent learning has positively impacted on raising individual achievement, and enhanced the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils.

Classrooms are bright, stimulating environments where technology is used effectively to reinforce teaching and adults effectively promote good learning. Whole school policies are implemented uniformly and effectively,

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is responsive to their needs and includes sufficient opportunities for them to practice and improve basic skills in literacy and numeracy by using them in different contexts – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership team provides clear and effective direction and are supported well by the subject coordinators. The impact is giving the school the ability to sustain improvement into the future. The headteacher demonstrates a strong determination, backed by robust data, to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards. The work of completing a self-evaluation document in conjunction with staff and governors remains unfinished.

Governance is more effective following restructuring and is now in a stronger position to act as the school's critical friend. Individual governors are taking responsibility for monitoring the curriculum or specific areas of the school's work. The emphasis on raising standards and achievement, and effective leadership, mean that there is now a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels make better use of information about how well pupils are doing in Years 3 to 6 to identify and tackle underachievement as soon as it arises – good.

External support

Since the last monitoring visit the local authority has undertaken another monitoring, which indicates that the school is now able to sustain improvement without additional support. The school's School Improvement Partner is effective in holding the senior leadership to account and focused on maintaining the good progress the school has made over the past year.