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13 December 2010

Mr M Fletcher
Acting Headteacher
Watermoor Church of England Primary School
Watermoor Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1JR

Dear Mr Fletcher

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

Following my visit to your school on 1–2 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

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 and Young People's Department for the Diocese of Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

Increase the rate of progress in mathematics for all groups by:

- raising expectations of how much and how fast pupils can learn
- ensuring that pupils have a secure knowledge of number facts
- improving planning for mathematical experiences in other subjects.

Improve the use of assessment to increase progress and raise expectations in all lessons by:

- making sure that pupils have individual targets which are focused on their next steps in learning in all English and mathematics lessons, and which change as soon as they are achieved
- involving pupils much more closely in knowing how well they are doing and in reaching the next level in their work.

Strengthen the way leaders at all levels drive and sustain improvement by:

- making all leaders fully accountable for improvement in their area of responsibility
- involving all leaders in regularly checking that whole-school systems and initiatives are effective and consistently applied by all staff.

Special measures: monitoring of Watermoor Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, visited lessons and looked at a wide range of the pupils' work. HMI met with the acting headteacher, executive headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the mathematics coordinator, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of pupils, the vice-chair of the governing body and two other governors, and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant turnover in teaching staff. The deputy headteacher left the school at the end of August 2010. Two new teachers and an acting deputy headteacher joined the school at the beginning of the autumn term 2010. Subsequently, one of the teachers left at the end of October, and was replaced by another new teacher. Another teacher already employed at the school is now the full-time special educational needs coordinator, with added responsibility for providing cover for teachers when they are not teaching their class. The acting deputy headteacher and the two new teachers are employed on temporary contracts for two years and one year respectively.

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

The school's assessment information shows that rates of progress are accelerating in mathematics and in writing, and standards are beginning to rise slowly. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of number facts and number patterns is improving due to better quality teaching of important strategies. As a result, pupils are becoming more adept at calculating the answers to number problems. Pupils are writing more confidently than at the time of the last monitoring inspection and some improvements have been made to sentence structure. The quality of presentation in pupils' books has improved and marking is frequent and regular. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment remains low and well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in writing. Too often, pupils repeat basic errors and there are significant gaps in key skills, such as grammar, punctuation and tense. The range of pupils' vocabulary is limited and there are very few examples of pupils using imaginative phrases to improve the quality, sophistication and complexity of their writing. The gap between the levels pupils are currently attaining and what they should be reaching for their age remains far too wide. Closing this gap, both in English and mathematics, remains a major challenge for the school.

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

- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics for all groups – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are generally good. The pupils are positive and readily welcome visitors. They are eager to talk about their work and appreciative of improvements that have been made in their school. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers and other adults who work with them, and are clearly happy in their work. They try hard to do their best, and only lose concentration and become restless when their work is too easy and fails to motivate them to improve.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Many of the considerable shortcomings and weaknesses reported at the last visit have been eliminated. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons was consistently satisfactory with some good features, which ensured the pupils made broadly satisfactory progress. There is a positive learning environment in all classrooms with a clear focus on raising standards. Lessons are well managed and expectations are much higher than previously. Teachers are far more knowledgeable about the standards achieved by the pupils in their class and are beginning to use this knowledge to inform their planning. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure, particularly in mathematics, where assessments are used satisfactorily to increase pupils' progress rates.

However, some important areas for improvement remain and this is most evident in the teaching of writing, where current planning does not take sufficient account of the pupils' different starting points and capabilities. Similarly, assessment is not used well enough to plan tasks that really tackle the causes of pupils' underachievement in writing, and teachers' marking often fails to pinpoint sufficiently accurately what pupils need to do in order to improve the quality of their written work. Too often, pupils with different levels of attainment spend far too long working on tasks that are pitched at the same level of difficulty. This is particularly the case during lesson introductions and whole-class sessions, and for the higher-attaining pupils.

Teaching assistants are generally deployed effectively and overall are making a satisfactory contribution to raising standards. In some cases, the effectiveness of teaching assistants is good, for example when they teach small intervention groups or targeted groups in lessons, such as in Years 5 and 6.

All pupils have targets for improvement in writing and mathematics. Many pupils know their targets and some can talk confidently about what their targets mean. A few pupils not only know their targets but can also demonstrate how they have reached their target and how this has improved the quality of their work. However, this is not a consistent feature and too many pupils are unclear as to what their

targets are and how their targets should be applied to their current work. This is particularly the case in writing.

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

- Improve the use of assessment to increase progress and raise expectations in all lessons – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to drive and embed improvements, strengthen the school's capacity, and effectively tackle the school's weaknesses. He has a very clear grasp of the issues facing the school and leads from the front. He inspires confidence and trust, and has been instrumental in raising staff morale, while at the same time challenging weaknesses. He ensures that all teachers and adults who work in the school are clearly focused on raising standards and improving the life chances of all pupils. The partnership arrangements with Bishop's Cleeve Primary are working well. The executive headteacher maintains a watchful eye on the school's recovery and other teachers from Bishop's Cleeve are providing helpful support and advice to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The leadership team has been strengthened by the appointment of the acting deputy headteacher and improvements in the role of the special educational needs coordinator. In a relatively short period of time, the acting deputy headteacher has further developed a systematic and coherent programme to assess and track the pupils' progress and their attainment levels. This information is beginning to be used to hold teachers to account for the standards reached by the pupils in their care, although assessment data are not yet used sufficiently effectively to set improvement targets for all groups. The acting deputy headteacher has been successful in helping teachers improve the quality of their work and is making a sound contribution to the school's strategic leadership. The special educational needs coordinator is benefiting from the acting headteacher's clear leadership and direction, and is responding well to her responsibilities. The newly appointed mathematics coordinator, although inexperienced in her role, is making a satisfactory contribution to school improvement.

The acting headteacher holds all leaders to account for the quality and impact of their work and is making sure that their monitoring role continues to develop and improve. Monitoring and evaluation are systematic and rigorous, demonstrated by the arrangements for observing lessons and giving teachers clear feedback about their work, and the raising attainment plans which are reviewed and amended regularly. The raising attainment plans are a clear demonstration of the school's rigorous evaluation of the impact of initiatives in relation to lifting pupils' achievement levels and narrowing the attainment gap. The major challenge now facing the school's leadership is to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently

good or better and to clearly demonstrate that improvements are sustainable and embedded.

The governing body is making a more positive contribution to school improvement than at the time of the last monitoring visit. This is particularly demonstrated by the work of the vice-chair who is a frequent visitor to the school, ensuring the governors provide both support and challenge, particularly for the acting headteacher, as well as holding the school to account for the actions taken to improve the quality of education for all pupils. This close involvement of governors will become even more essential as the school seeks to put in place a budget deficit recovery plan which shows practical proposals and a clear timescale for balancing the school's budget.

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

- Strengthen the way leaders at all levels drive and sustain improvement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority continues to meet the commitments set out in its statement of action. Local authority staff and the school's School Improvement Partner provide a good range of support and challenge. This is best shown by the regular monitoring of the school's effectiveness and helpful and realistic evaluation of the school's progress. Training provided for governors has helped improve their understanding of how they can make the most effective contribution to school improvement. The training has been well received by the governing body.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and increase rates of progress in writing