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Mr P Barraclough
Consultant Headteacher
Brenchley and Matfield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Market Heath
Brenchley
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Kent
TN12 7NY

Dear Mr Barraclough

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Brenchley and Matfield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 and 3 February 2011, 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 March 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 the last monitoring visit – satisfactory

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Rochester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

Increase rates of learning and progress in literacy and numeracy by:

- making sure that teachers have a shared understanding of the expectations and challenge required to ensure that all pupils make swift gains in their learning
- ensuring that support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is an established part of the school's provision
- using information from tracking pupils' progress, assessing and marking to match work consistently to pupils' needs
- ensuring pupils know their targets and how to improve their work
- planning the curriculum to build systematically upon pupils' prior experience and ensure pupils develop their computing skills
- increasing the rigour with which leaders, managers and governors monitor the school's performance in order to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of provision.

Ensure that community cohesion is effectively promoted at local, national and global levels and fosters pupils' cultural awareness.

Special measures: monitoring of Brenchley and Matfield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 February 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work. All teachers were observed teaching and the inspector visited 14 parts of lessons and a choral worship assembly. She scrutinised documents, pupils' books and assessment information and met with the consultant headteacher, senior staff, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The interim headteacher who was in post at the last inspection left at the end of the autumn term. During much of the term he was supported by a consultant headteacher who was previously the School Improvement Partner. The consultant headteacher now leads the school and a local authority advisor is working full time as assistant headteacher.

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

There has been a marked improvement in pupils' active involvement in lessons and this means that they are enjoying their learning much more. This is evident in the relish with which they take on tasks such as writing letters of application to become ghost hunters in Year 6 or rushing to show off their model Anderson shelters in Year 4. It is clear from the work in pupils' books and on display throughout the school that most pupils are beginning to make better progress in their learning. In some classes the pace of learning is beginning to speed up so that it is now good but this is inconsistent across the school. A slower pace of learning is particularly evident with those pupils who have fallen behind most due to poor provision in the past. Current provision is not yet good enough to make up the shortfall. Interventions are now being implemented more rigorously to help these pupils catch up and teaching assistants have received good training to enable them to provide this support.

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

- Increase rates of learning and progress in literacy and numeracy – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are generally polite, friendly and behave well. There has been a marked improvement in their attitudes to learning. This is because the learning is much more interesting and they are more often active participants in lessons rather than the sometimes rather restless and bored observers seen on the last visit. There are still occasional instances of rather disrespectful behaviour towards adults but these are decreasing as relationships improve.

The effectiveness of provision

All of the teaching and learning seen during this visit were satisfactory and there were pockets of good practice. This is a major improvement. Lessons are increasingly well planned so that they get off to a lively and interesting start which involves all of the pupils. There is some good use of links across subjects to make the learning more relevant and interesting. For example, Reception children are exploring the Chinese New Year across the different areas of learning and are able to talk confidently about what they are learning. The same is true in Year 4 with their work on the Second World War. This demonstrates a shift in emphasis and a greater recognition of the importance of the curriculum being planned to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants now have planning time together while pupils benefit from well-organised sports coaching, music and art teaching. The good quality of the art work can be seen on display and the short visit to hear the choral ensemble during the visit was uplifting.

The main reason why most of the lessons were satisfactory rather than good is because the learning steps in lessons are not clear enough and the match of activity to pupils' abilities is still not quite right. Sometimes the tasks cover ground that the pupils already know and understand and in other cases the activities are too difficult for groups of pupils. All lessons have learning objectives and these are shared with the pupils; however, these are often rather vague and the more precise learning which needs to take place for different groups is not clear enough. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly: they identify whether pupils have achieved objectives and provide some helpful guidance. However, as the marking is based on the learning objectives, there are times when it is similarly imprecise. There are some good examples of peer review and of pupils responding to the marking, particularly in Year 6.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

This is the area where most improvement was required and the significant strengthening of leadership has had a positive impact. The current senior leadership team has transformed the atmosphere in school and has done so in a relatively short time. The consultant headteacher and the assistant headteacher have been

seconded into the school by the local authority and are well supported by other advisory colleagues. They have rightly sharpened improvement planning so that it focuses on improving the quality of teaching and, in particular, on pupils' learning. They have set clear priorities and expectations, and established appropriate management systems and routines. As a result, there is greater understanding among staff about what is required and this is reflected in their growing confidence. Monitoring is rigorous and pinpoints areas for improvement and is now appropriately followed up with one-to-one coaching and modelling. Staff are supported to improve their practice on a day-to-day basis and there is greater clarity about what needs to change and why. There is also more celebration of what is working well. This has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and in a more positive atmosphere generally. Assessment information and tracking are now clearer and more usable; however, the accuracy of some of the data is not yet secure enough and the data are not well enough understood by staff to accurately inform their day-to-day planning.

The governing body has a sharper, more realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The changes since the last inspection have resulted in all members of the school community developing a stronger sense of shared commitment and belonging. As a result, community cohesion at its most basic level is improving.

The improvements are still very fragile and dependant on external support. Many of the improvements are very recent and will take time to become embedded. There is still much to do to improve provision so that there is the consistent good practice which is needed to accelerate the pace of pupils' progress.

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

- Increase the rigour with which leaders, managers and governors monitor the school's performance in order to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of provision – satisfactory
- Ensure that community cohesion is effectively promoted at local, national and global levels and fosters pupils' cultural awareness– satisfactory

External support

The local authority is providing senior leadership, advisory and financial support, and a local authority appointment has strengthened the governing body. The school has had some of this support in the past but it is now having a positive impact because it is being managed well and followed up in the classrooms on a daily basis. There is a sense of local authority colleagues 'working with' rather than 'doing to' the school.

The local authority is now carrying out its monitoring and evaluation role rigorously.

Priorities for further improvement

- Clarify learning objectives and use sharper, more precise targets for learning in each lesson and sequences of lessons.