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15 March 2011

Mr M Fletcher
The 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 8 and 9 March 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 third 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 – good.

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 third monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2011

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 numeracy and literacy subject leaders, the reception class language coordinator, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

There has been no significant change in the school's context since the previous monitoring inspection. A major focus for this inspection was to evaluate the impact of changes made to the writing curriculum.

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

Rates of progress continue to accelerate and standards are rising. Pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics is becoming much stronger as a result of better teaching. In writing, 93% of the pupils have made good or better progress in just under a year. In mathematics, 62% have made good or better progress in a similar period of time. The quality of pupils' written work has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Significant and positive changes have been made to the way in which writing is taught and this has led to an increase in pupils' confidence and the amount which pupils write. Good use of published texts has led to pupils writing sentences and paragraphs which are more sophisticated and complex than previously was the case.

There is no doubt that the gap between the levels pupils should be reaching for their age and what they are currently attaining is narrowing at an increasingly speedy rate. In mathematics, the number of pupils who are working at age-related levels has risen from 37% in December 2010 to 57% currently. In writing there has been a rise from 24% to 44%. Nevertheless, the figures clearly show that too many pupils are performing at a level which is below what they should be reaching. This is shown mostly in writing where weaknesses remain in spelling, presentation, punctuation and the range of vocabulary used, particularly when writing stories.

The pupils who are on the school's register of special educational needs, those who are underachieving and those who are vulnerable have made accelerated progress

particularly since November 2010. Just over 58% of these pupils have made good or better progress in writing and 19% have made exceptional progress. Progress in numeracy has not been as rapid. While progress overall is slower it is still generally satisfactory. In a similar time period, 17% have made good or better progress improving their knowledge and skills in mathematics.

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, although not yet consistently so in all lessons and group activities. The great majority of pupils are very keen to talk about their work and clearly enjoy coming to school. This is shown very well at the beginning of the school day when the pupils arrive eagerly in their classrooms, behave sensibly, settle quickly and are impressively keen to get on with their work. Relationships with adults are generally very good and there is a good level of mutual respect between adults and children. There are a few occasions however, when pupils' attitudes to learning are not as positive as they might be, particularly when their work is not sufficiently challenging.

The effectiveness of provision

There have been significant and positive improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the teaching of writing. A thorough and rigorous review of the writing curriculum at the end of the autumn term 2010 was immediately followed by introducing important changes to the structure and content of writing lessons at the beginning of January 2011. The acting deputy headteacher has made a significant contribution to this development. Teachers are making good use of assessment information to plan writing tasks that more closely match the pupils' different starting points and capabilities, although this is not always the case for the higher attaining pupils. Learning objectives are carefully targeted to meet most individual and group needs and teachers have reorganised lessons to ensure that they maximise their teaching time and the time available for the pupils to learn and practise new skills and knowledge. Teachers' marking is far more focused on identifying what pupils need to do next to make further improvements in their work. These actions have led to an increase in pupils' confidence to write independently and their improved rates of progress.

Teachers make good use of classroom environments to promote pupils' learning and raise attainment levels, for example through the many displays of good-quality exemplars and pupils' own work, as well as other relevant resources. Teaching assistants are deployed more effectively than previously and are making a positive contribution to raising standards. They have been particularly effective in supporting teachers with the changes to the writing curriculum.

While there is no doubt that the quality of teaching and learning continues to strengthen and improve, there is still insufficient challenge for many of the higher attaining pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. Teachers are not yet consistently adept at planning sufficiently demanding tasks which challenge and motivate the higher attaining pupils to achieve at a faster rate and produce work which consistently matches their capabilities.

The use of pupil targets to raise standards in writing has had a significant and positive impact. The great majority of pupils speak confidently about their writing targets and can show how they have used the targets to improve the quality of their writing. For example, pupils in Class 3 demonstrated an impressive understanding of how to improve the complexity of sentences by using commas and a clause to add meaning and interest for the reader. The use of pupil targets in mathematics is less well developed. Numeracy targets do not always relate to the pupils' day-to-day work and are not evident in all lessons. When asked about their numeracy targets, many pupils in Key Stage 2 could not show how their targets were helping them improve.

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 – good in writing and satisfactory in mathematics.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Under the astute and rigorous leadership of the acting headteacher, and supported extremely well by the acting deputy headteacher, the school has systematically addressed the weaknesses identified by the previous monitoring inspection. Leaders and managers have made effective decisions based on a robust evaluation of the school's needs, taking full account of inspection evidence and the outcomes of internal monitoring. Resources have been reorganised efficiently and interventions targeted effectively to tackle underachievement. These actions have led to marked improvements in lifting attainment levels and increasing rates of pupils' progress, particularly in writing. Day-to-day and strategic planning is strong, as demonstrated by the very rigorous and thorough rapid action plans, which are used well to drive improvements. The acting headteacher is impressive in his resolute determination to continue improving the quality of education and ensure that all pupils have the best possible chance of making a success of their time at the school, both academically and in their personal and social development.

There is a relentless focus on raising attainment and increasing the rate at which pupils' achieve new skills and knowledge. This is demonstrated by the effective use of assessment data to track pupils' progress, raise expectations and target interventions where they are most needed. The special educational needs coordinator provides good leadership. She has introduced rigorous systems for

monitoring and evaluating the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who are underachieving and who are vulnerable. There is a strong and effective focus on making sure all these pupils have equal opportunities to do well and learn new skills and knowledge.

Subject leaders are making a far more positive contribution to the overall quality of leadership and management. They have produced helpful action plans and reports for governors and have a clear understanding that their role and effectiveness are evaluated against the impact they have on raising standards in their subject area.

The governing body continues to develop its role in monitoring the school's progress, particularly through the effective work of the vice-chair of governors, who presents regular reports, based on the school's tracking data, to governors' committees and the full governing body. The chair of governors has led important discussions about the school's budget deficit, both within the governing body and also with the local authority. He has set out the options facing the school and provided useful background information to help governors decide how they can best plan to reduce the deficit. Although there has been a recently-agreed increase in the school's deficit, the governors have produced a four-year budget deficit recovery plan which shows how the budget is expected to balance by 2015 at the latest. The local authority has agreed this plan in principle and also to provide the school with additional funding. Senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body have agreed that the governors' budget deficit recovery plan should be taken forward as a matter of urgency and that the plan should be formally agreed and approved by the local authority without delay.

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

- strengthen the way leaders at all levels drive and sustain improvement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school and meet the commitments set out in its statement of action. The school's improvement consultant keeps a watchful eye on progress against the key areas for improvement and has carried out joint monitoring and evaluation activities with the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. Local authority progress reports are accurate and have made an important contribution in helping the school continue to improve.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards further and increase rates of progress in writing.