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25 March 2011

Mrs H Williams  
Headteacher  
Orchards Church of England Primary School  
Cherry Road  
Wisbech  
PE13 3NP

Dear Mrs Williams

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Orchards Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school with Meg Hackney, additional inspector, on 23 and 24 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 December 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 – satisfactory.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

**Martin Cragg**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009**

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to at least the national average by:
  - increasing significantly the rates of progress pupils make
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to write across subjects and at length
  - creating more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in a range of different contexts.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - using assessment data more effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning
  - making lessons more stimulating, so that they capture and develop pupils' interests
  - improving teachers' skills in using questions to challenge pupils and help them develop their ideas
  - establishing stronger links between different areas of learning
  - using marking to show pupils how to improve their work.
- Increase attendance to at least the national average by:
  - taking more account of pupils' views in providing a curriculum that interests and engages them and makes them want to come to school
  - using the full range of legal and other processes to bring about very rapid improvement.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - monitoring the performance of groups of pupils and individuals more closely and accurately to ensure that they all achieve as well as they can
  - developing further a sense of common purpose amongst senior leaders so that all have clearly understood areas of responsibility and are held strongly to account.
  - working with the local authority to ensure that any impediments to good governance are quickly removed.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Orchards Church of England Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

There have been no changes in the context of the school since the last visit.

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

Senior staff now collect and analyse assessment information regularly. The latest data show that pupils in Year 6 have made good progress this year from their low starting points at the end of Year 5. It has been best in mathematics. However, pupils' attainment, while on target to improve on that of 2010, remains below average. Increasingly effective teaching in Year 6, using the specific expertise of one teacher for mathematics and the other for English, is beginning to close the gap on the levels expected nationally. Year 6 pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make better progress than their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make broadly similar progress to their peers. Those who speak English as an additional language are making less progress than their peers. Several are at a very early stage of learning English but beginning to acquire basic words and phrases.

The school's assessment information for other year groups indicates that pupils in Reception classes and Year 2 are also beginning to make good progress, again because of improving teaching. While there are some positive signs of improvement in other year groups, progress in these is more variable. It is improving steadily in mathematics because of a focus on using subject terms accurately and practising skills through activities. Nevertheless, progress in Years 3 to 5 remains satisfactory in reading and slower in writing. Too many pupils in these groups are not yet secure enough in basic skills. They often follow whole class teaching but then find it more difficult to apply their skills or work independently. As a result, their progress is not rapid enough to close the gap on the attainment expected for their age though it is narrowing.

In lessons, pupils make mostly satisfactory and sometimes good progress. They show enjoyment when activities are lively, for example in a story-telling task and when using a computer program to predict the reflective symmetry of shapes. They work together effectively and older pupils use discussion and thinking time well.

Some pupils still find talking in front of the class daunting. Others also lack the confidence and necessary skills to work successfully in groups unless they are led by an adult.

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

- raise standards in English and mathematics to at least the national average – good.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are improving. In discussions they said that they enjoyed listening to visiting speakers, for example the recent presentation to Year 6 on recycling and the opportunity to look closely at snakes and spiders. They also enjoyed themed days such as that combining local history and mathematics. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is mostly satisfactory and often good. However, a small number of pupils find listening difficult and sometimes their enthusiasm means that they talk when they should be paying attention to others. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they are confident that teachers will deal effectively with any concerns that they raise. They are rightly proud of the money that they raise for charity, for example on Red Nose day. Pupils in Year 6 showed good understanding of the issues raised by effective recycling and how this would benefit the environment and save the school money.

Staff have introduced a range of new strategies for improving attendance since the last visit. Pupils' attendance is more closely monitored, including across different groups. It now has a high profile in the school and pupils value the regular comparison between classes and rewards for good attendance. The school is working hard to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent through closer contact with parents and using legal processes where necessary. As a result, attendance has improved on last year and is closer to the target set by the local authority although it remains well below average. Nevertheless, the trend is improving because the strategies put in place are successful.

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

- increase attendance to at least the national average – good.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching is improving. During this visit it was at least satisfactory and around half was good or better. It is strongest in the Reception classes, Years 2 and 6, but is still variable in other years. Senior staff have worked hard to make expectations of teachers clear. As a result, teachers' planning is now more consistent. Teachers make the objectives for learning clear and ensure that pupils

understand them. In the best lessons, teachers have very good subject knowledge and use subject terms with precision, increasingly encouraging pupils to use them accurately. They use questions well to check pupils' understanding and to develop their ideas and ability to explain their views. They use success criteria effectively to help pupils evaluate how well they understand. However, there are also lessons where teachers' subject knowledge is not sufficiently strong to ensure that pupils secure key concepts quickly. Although teachers' use of questions is improving, there are still occasions where there is not sufficient challenge or pupils are not given the opportunity to share their ideas. The support provided by other adults in lessons is committed but varies in quality. Some is highly effective but there are also occasions where the focus is on behaviour and completing the task more than learning. Teachers' understanding of how to assist pupils who are at an early stage of learning English is also too variable.

The quality of teachers' marking is more consistent. Teachers now comment on the learning objectives and usually make clear what pupils need to do to improve their work. Marking is particularly effective in Year 6. In other years it is not always clear exactly where in their work pupils should apply the target that they have been given. Older pupils are most familiar with assessing their own understanding and progress using clear criteria. They can usually provide reasons to justify their assessment. In other years, these skills are still developing.

Pupils say that they enjoy lessons more now because the activities that they are given are more practical and interesting. Staff provide better opportunities for pupils to practise speaking and listening, for example in retelling a story in groups using actions and words. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a good focus on developing language skills and widening vocabulary, and increasingly effective use of the outdoor facilities to extend learning. Children readily choose independent activities which help them to develop their language and early writing skills.

There is now a better system for recording and monitoring the progress of pupils with a range of different needs. For pupils who speak English as an additional language this includes greater focus on the differing needs of those who are new to English in comparison to those who are more competent. Nevertheless, strategies to improve progress are at an early stage. The systems for identifying and allocating support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now more established. There is a full range of interventions to support pupils in literacy, numeracy, behaviour and social skills, including individual tuition. Monitoring of pupils' progress within these programmes indicates that many are beginning to show improvement.

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

- improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better – satisfactory.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Senior staff have established clear expectations and set challenging targets for improvement. New policies and practices on assessment and marking, teachers' planning and the use of questions are beginning to provide greater consistency in lessons. There is a strong focus on improving the teaching of mathematics and providing pupils with opportunities to practise speaking and listening. Increasingly, subject and team leaders take responsibility not just for planning in their areas but also for monitoring and evaluating provision. The headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and is aware of the areas for development. Senior staff analyse pupils' progress thoroughly and have a good understanding of where it is better and where it requires improvement. These factors are beginning to accelerate improvement in the school although there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching and its impact on learning to close the gap on national expectations in all years.

School staff have worked hard to communicate the importance of regular attendance to parents, including regular attendance newsletters and immediate contact where there are concerns over absence. Bilingual teaching assistants make contact with families where English may not be used at home. The family support worker and well-being team meet with parents regularly and these contacts are helping to reduce non attendance. Basic procedures to ensure pupils' safety are in place.

The governing body is developing its capacity to hold the school to account. Members of the governing body increasingly ask relevant questions in meetings. There is a planned programme of paired visits to review particular aspects of the school's work and findings are reported back at governing body meetings. The local authority's advisory governors continue to provide helpful guidance and expertise. Recent changes in personnel have required reallocation of roles and the need to train new governors.

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

- increase the effectiveness of leadership and management – good.

## **External support**

The local authority provides comprehensive and effective support across a wide range of aspects of the school's work. Recently an experienced educational welfare officer has given training on monitoring and following up absence. The subject leader for mathematics has revised the action plan with consultant support. Local authority staff conducted a full review of teaching in January 2011. The local authority also reviews the school's progress on a monthly basis.