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31 March 2011

Ms Kerri Burns  
Headteacher  
Pells Church of England Primary School  
Landport Road  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 2SU

Dear Ms Burns

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

Following my visit to your school on 29 and 30 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. 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 – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate.

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 governors, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Diocesan Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Raise achievement and standards, and improve the quality of teaching and learning, by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and recorded, and this information used to:
  - monitor how well pupils are doing
  - plan the next steps in learning for pupils of different ages and abilities, so that all are appropriately challenged, especially the more able.
- Develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards.

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

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and the executive headteacher, other staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

The school continues to be supported by an executive headteacher seconded from another local school. Three classroom assistants have joined the staff to replace three who have left. Teaching in one of the Key Stage 2 classes is being provided by a classroom assistant, who is also a supply teacher, because the usual teacher is on extended sick leave. Seven new pupils have joined the school, mainly going into the younger classes.

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

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has continued to improve. Children are making accelerated progress in lessons and over time so that many more are on target to reach the levels expected by the end of the Reception Year. They very much enjoy learning and are making up for their low overall attainment on entry. Better progress is now also evident among Year 1 and 2 pupils so they are reaching higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils have a greater legacy of past underachievement to tackle than those in the Reception year but are working more purposefully in lessons because of improved teaching. The new pupils are settling well into the increasingly established routines for learning.

Improvement in achievement for pupils in Key Stage 2 classes has faltered because of too little improvement in teaching overall and the ineffectiveness of arrangements for covering the absent teacher. Pupils' progress in lessons is at best satisfactory and sometimes inadequate. While younger pupils are developing stronger independent learning skills, older pupils are not clear enough about how to improve their work in lessons or record their learning for future reference. Their understanding of their long-term goals is patchy, notably in mathematics, where most are only aware of the times tables they are learning rather than targets across a range of mathematical operations. End-of-year targets for pupils, including in Year 6, are unlikely to be met. The presentation of pupils' work in Key Stage 2 is weak, particularly among boys, compounding their difficulties in reflecting back on what they have done or using it as a source of learning.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour among pupils continues to be a mixed picture. In lessons, younger pupils are increasingly keen and able to contribute to their own learning. They are building good routines for learning, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where many start with low levels of social and emotional development. Among older pupils lessons are usually calm but pupils are too dependent on adult help to move forward. While most start lessons with positive attitudes, the restlessness apparent during the last visit has not diminished. In some lessons pupils lose concentration easily when activities are not purposeful, reflecting the fact that a drive for learning is not embedded for pupils of this age. Around the school and between lessons, pupils' behaviour is good. They are welcoming and most behave well towards each other. Pupils reflected thoughtfully in an assembly about the common issues affecting people regardless of where they live. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school community, for example older pupils organise a play leader rota and led recent work to tackle name-calling. The school recognises that opportunities for pupils to contribute are satisfactory rather than good and has plans for widening them, for example offering a club for improving the wildlife area. Attendance has fallen further since the last inspection, with more pupils regularly absent and overall attendance well below average.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the impact of work to ensure all pupils attend regularly by helping parents and carers understand the impact of poor attendance on their children's achievement and life chances – inadequate.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

Provision in the Reception/Year 1 class continues to go from strength to strength. Children's learning is planned closely around their individual needs, with skilled teamwork between staff, including to support those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The improvements have spread to the Year 1/2 class, where learning is now more practical and engaging. In lessons, key ideas for learning are modelled well, such as in role play to help pupils imagine the Great Fire of London. The criteria for effective work are clarified for pupils so they are beginning to know what they are looking for and to evaluate their own work. Relationships between staff and pupils in these younger classes are good and behaviour is managed well. Additional adults are deployed effectively to support pupils with additional needs. Increasingly effective use is made of thematic 'learning journeys' to connect learning in different subjects. These are well presented in folders and together with writing samples provide a valuable record of progress to aid teachers' planning.

At Key Stage 2, teaching is too often only satisfactory, and sometimes inadequate, and is not ensuring pupils make the good progress required. Arrangements for covering the long-term absence of a teacher have not secured good teaching. In lessons too little consideration is given to meeting the needs of pupils of different ability, helping them understand and record ideas or ensure they know what to do to produce good quality work. For example, in a science lesson where pupils tested materials for transparency, they were not told about concepts such as a fair test, helped to set their work out properly or challenged at levels tailored to their varied scientific skills. Assessment data about pupils' progress are not used consistently to plan teaching. Feedback for pupils about how to move on remains inconsistent. Some marking is good but on other occasions the school's policy is not followed and it does not draw pupils' attention to the steps needed to reach their targets. In common with younger pupils, older ones enjoy the learning journey themes. They have completed some high quality pieces, including models made at home. However, the presentation of folders completed in school is not always good enough.

Guided reading sessions have been adapted to link more closely to the themes studied in pupils' learning journeys and thereby offer greater potential to reinforce learning. Pupils welcome additional reading opportunities such as the morning 'book club' where they review books and have breakfast.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved through further refinement of small group work and provision of information to class teachers about pupils' needs. The small group sessions make a good impact on learning. These gains are capitalised on fully by younger pupils when returning to work in their classes because their teachers take account of the progress made. This is less consistent in the teaching of older classes. Good steps have been taken to improve care for pupils by providing a nurture room. Those who find difficulty behaving well say it is a useful area when they need to think quietly before rejoining their peers. Assemblies are now provided every two weeks by the parish vicar, affording better opportunities for spiritual reflection.

The school is taking action to raise attendance but has not succeeded so far. Staff are working with families where there are concerns and liaising with external partners such as educational welfare staff. Unfortunately, some pupils continue to be removed for holidays in term time and for minor illness. Some sickness bugs have depressed the school's figures but not enough is being done to improve the underlying trend.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and

recorded, and this information used to monitor their progress and plan challenging next steps in learning for all, especially the more able – inadequate.

- Develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision – good.

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

Senior leaders are committed to the school. They are improving outcomes for younger pupils but recognise that they have made too little impact at Key Stage 2. Actions to improve teaching for older pupils, including short-term arrangements to cover staff absence, have not worked. Monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress gives senior leaders an accurate view of the quality of provision. However, using this to improve provision has only been partly effective in challenging weaker practices. Feedback from lesson observations now focuses more on pupils' learning but is not always distilled down to give teachers straightforward messages about what must improve. Strategic plans for raising attainment and improving attendance still contain too many separate areas to clarify the key tasks and show how the impact will be checked. Subject leaders for English and mathematics are working hard to develop in their roles. They are more involved in monitoring pupils' progress by referring to assessment data and work scrutiny. They have a growing awareness of weaker aspects of provision and are beginning to lead staff training in these areas. Attendance at training courses for these staff, and for the coordinator for special educational needs, is improving their effectiveness. The governing body remains keen to challenge and support school leaders but has not checked closely enough the messages arising from assessment data about pupils' progress. This requires a better understanding of the information, and training in this is imminent. Good steps have been taken to make parents and carers more welcome in school and to gather their views. Their involvement in their children's learning has improved among the youngest pupils but there is further to go to achieve this with older pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to support the school through a wide range of personnel and visits from the link officer. The impact of this work has been good on younger pupils but the local authority recognises a need for a re-doubling of efforts to improve outcomes for older pupils and the school's capacity to sustain them.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Rapidly increase the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 by:
  - ensuring high quality staff are in place
  - clarifying the actions being taken to improve teaching so everyone involved knows what their contribution is and the impact can be checked
  - simplifying the outcomes from monitoring of teaching to provide unequivocal feedback for staff about what needs to improve.
- Improve Key Stage 2 pupils' ability to improve their own work.