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Mrs Emma Tayler
Cottingham Church of England School
Berryfield Road
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LE16 8XB

Dear Mrs Tayler

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cottingham Church of England School

Following my visit to your school on 30 and 31 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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.

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 Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment in writing, mathematics and science across the school by ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan learning that matches pupils' different abilities, especially in providing challenge for more-able pupils.
- Raise the quality of teaching to at least satisfactory by ensuring teachers:
 - identify precise learning objectives and success criteria and share these with pupils so that they and their parents know clearly how well they are doing and how to improve
 - adjust teaching methods and curriculum activities so that they systematically build pupils' learning and skills.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of subject leadership and the Early Years Foundation Stage so that rigorous checks of pupils' achievement and progress lead to actions that result in improvements to teaching and the curriculum.

Special measures: monitoring of Cottingham Church of England School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 30 March 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a group of pupils, staff, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

One teacher is on a sabbatical break. There are now two discrete classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

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

The new headteacher has rapidly established an effective system for collating the assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. This information is collected and analysed at six points during the year and pupils' progress from the last recording point closely monitored. The school's assessment information shows that progress is improving. A majority of pupils are making the progress expected of them and some are making more than expected progress. It is not yet consistent across classes or strong enough to ensure that all pupils reach the levels that might be expected from their starting points at the end of Year 2. For the current Year 6, the assessment information indicates that they are on track to match or exceed the 2010 results in national tests, which were broadly average. Attainment has improved most in mathematics. However, in most year groups progress is slower in reading. The staff have recognised this and introduced a more systematic approach to teaching reading. Teachers are also more aware of the need to plan for progression in science and have made plans to assess pupils' progress next term.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers have redesigned the system for tracking children's progress. There is now a thorough process for assessing what children have learnt and recording this so that it can be analysed and used in teachers' planning. Teachers have identified where improvement is still required in letters and sounds, writing, calculation and other aspects of mathematics. The information indicates that a majority of children are making satisfactory progress and their attainment is on track to be broadly in line with that expected nationally at the end of the Reception year.

In lessons, pupils make mostly satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Most settle to work promptly, listen attentively and are keen to contribute to class discussion. They work well in pairs and small groups. Older pupils enjoy assessing

each other's work and offering suggestions for improvement. Pupils enjoy learning practically, for example when asked to devise strategies for sorting solids in a science lesson, or using different shapes to explore fractions in mathematics. However, a small number of pupils do not listen as well as they could and lose concentration if they are not directly engaged in class question and answer sessions.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Raise attainment in writing, mathematics and science across the school – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils mostly have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy special activities such as the recent work with a visiting artist and themed activities related to World War II. Most behave well and want to learn. They say that they feel safe and trust staff to sort out any concerns which they raise. They enjoy taking on responsibility and value the increased range of equipment and activities available to them at breaks. There are effective systems for monitoring attendance and following up pupils' absence. Attendance remains above the national average. Pupils speak positively of the relationships between different age groups and say that they mix well across the school.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is improving. The headteacher has acted promptly to tackle the weaknesses in teaching identified at the inspection. Effective support from local authority staff ensures that each teacher receives individual guidance and coaching, and develops an action plan. These plans are well focused and personalised. The local authority reviewed teaching in January 2011, based on the action plans, and found that the profile of teaching had improved since the inspection. Most of the teaching was satisfactory and around a fifth was good. However, a fifth was inadequate. The observations made on this inspection confirm that most teaching is satisfactory with an increasing proportion which is good and a small proportion which is inadequate.

Teachers have worked hard to improve their lesson planning. This work has rightly centred on mathematics and English but is now extending to science. Teachers increasingly use pupils' latest assessments to shape their planning and to match work more closely to pupils' capabilities. They ensure that they set work to stretch the most able and provide appropriate support for those who find learning more difficult. However, this is not always pitched accurately enough for all pupils. They provide clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils. In some cases, criteria for success are also shared and, in the best lessons, specific criteria are

targeted at pupils working at different levels, such as in a task to write a persuasive letter. However, this is not yet the case in all classes.

Teachers' skill in using assessment to shape learning is improving. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of questions and opportunities for discussion to ensure that pupils are challenged to extend their answers and explain their reasoning. Teachers check all pupils' understanding before they move into group or independent tasks. However, this is not consistent and in some classes teachers' use of questions is not sufficiently focused or well directed to review the learning and progress of all pupils. Teachers' marking is improving but remains variable in quality. In the best, teachers refer to learning objectives, highlight areas for correction and provide suggestions for improvement. However, some teachers make comments which are too general and do not give precise guidance on what pupils should do next.

The school's focus has rightly been on improving teaching but pupils speak positively about recent trips, visitors and their enjoyment of activities in the curriculum. The school has moved to a different long-term plan for the curriculum which has been proven to be effective in a successful school. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have been reviewed. Teaching assistants work closely with identified pupils in classes and there is an increasing range of additional support outside lessons. Senior staff are currently evaluating the effectiveness of specific programmes on pupils' progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Raise the quality of teaching to at least satisfactory – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the inspection, the headteacher has established a clear vision for the school and has set high expectations for staff and pupils. Supported effectively by senior staff and the local authority, she has rapidly assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the school and acted promptly to put improvements in place. She has been prepared to take difficult decisions such as separating classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This change is already helping to focus learning and improve children's progress. The headteacher has drawn up detailed plans which are focused well on the key areas for improvement. There is a planned cycle for monitoring performance. The recording of outcomes is thorough and detailed analysis leads to further plans for action, for example in teacher's individual plans which have helped to improve teaching overall. The headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and a clear understanding of areas for further improvement.

To accelerate the improvements in the school, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken on greater responsibilities including leading on English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage. They have reviewed planning and provision in these areas, promoting agreed approaches. Some other staff are contributing through leadership in science and in the provision for the youngest children. They are in the early stages of these roles but are beginning to implement changes. The monitoring of impact is still mainly led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Members of the governing body now make visits to the school and join learning walks with the headteacher to review the school's work directly. They ask increasingly challenging questions at meetings and assess the detailed information which the headteacher provides. Basic measures to ensure the safety of pupils are in place.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Strengthen the effectiveness of subject leadership and the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has produced a statement of action to improve the school which fulfils the requirements set out by Ofsted. It contains a comprehensive range of action and support, planned to assist the school in tackling the key issues from the inspection. An extensive range of local authority staff have supported the school by coaching teachers, reviewing their planning, providing training on assessment and teaching methods, developing the curriculum and working alongside subject and Key Stage leaders. This support has been effective in consolidating practice and giving teachers increasing confidence to try out new approaches. The impact has been most evident in the quality of lesson planning, quality of teaching and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority reviews the progress that the school is making regularly. The school has benefited from working closely with staff from a successful partner school, especially on aspects of leadership and in science. The Diocese has provided an experienced additional governor to extend the expertise of the governing body.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve teachers' use of questioning to check the understanding of all pupils and develop their ability to explain their ideas.