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Mrs L Burton and Mr C Phillips
Headteacher (designate) and Interim Headteacher
St Mary and John Church of England Primary School
Hertford Street
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX4 3AJ

Dear Mrs Burton and Mr Phillips

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary and John Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Liz Kounnou, additional inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 May 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 November 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 is 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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of leadership at the highest level by:
 - instilling strong and effective vision, drive and ambition and ensuring that these permeate the school's work across both sites to raise aspirations and expectations for pupils' academic achievements
 - ensuring that monitoring and evaluation are systematic, effective and accurate to bring about a strong and demonstrable impact on improving pupils' attainment and achievement.

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to above average by the end of Year 6 and narrow the gap between the attainment of Pakistani pupils in school compared to this group nationally, by:
 - improving the learning and progress of Pakistani pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2
 - monitoring all pupils' progress more regularly and effectively to identify quickly any pupils who are underachieving and ensure they make accelerated progress
 - ensuring subject leaders in English and mathematics have a greater impact on improving outcomes, particularly for Pakistani pupils.

- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2, by:
 - using the information from pupils' prior attainment and assessments more consistently and effectively to plan appropriate work
 - broadening the range of strategies used by all teachers to ensure a sharp focus on what pupils of differing abilities should and will learn in lessons
 - ensuring pupils from Pakistani families are fully included in lessons
 - implementing an effective system for monitoring the quality of teaching that draws upon a range of evidence and leads to improved learning.

Special measures: monitoring of St Mary and John Church of England Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5 – 6 May 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons and scrutinised pupils' work, reviewed school documents and met with governors, parents, pupils and representatives of the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. She takes up post in September. Following the inspection an interim headteacher, now the headteacher designate, led the school during the spring term and a new interim headteacher has been appointed for the summer term.

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

Pupils' attainment is average. Their achievements and progress in English and mathematics are satisfactory. There is, however, too much variability between year groups in Key Stages 1 and 2 in the proportion of pupils who are reaching expected levels of attainment, though this is improving. The school's recent monitoring shows that about three quarters of pupils in Year 6 are achieving nationally expected levels in English and mathematics. This group started Key Stage 2 with below average attainment. The proportion of pupils working at the higher levels is average. Scrutiny of pupils' books across the school shows that there are weaknesses in the presentation of work and spelling.

Since the last inspection there has been a satisfactory improvement in the proportion of Pakistani pupils who are working at expected levels. This is because the improved procedures to monitor progress are providing teachers with better information about how well different groups of pupils are doing. The accuracy of teachers' assessment has also improved.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas of improvement:

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to above average by the end of Year 6 and narrow the gap between the attainment of Pakistani pupils in school compared to this group nationally – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour is good. Relationships are supportive and respectful, exemplified by pupils' willingness to participate in activities such as 'circle time' discussions. Pupils listen well to each other. The classroom ethos is such that they are confident to answer questions and give their ideas. Pupils are very willing to learn and engage with their tasks but they can lose concentration when activities are not clear or whole-class discussions are too long. During discussions with inspectors a group of Year 6 pupils were pleased with their progress and believe that it has improved since the last inspection. They recognise that the new headteacher has taken an interest in their learning. Attendance is satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The majority of teaching is satisfactory. There is some good teaching but there remain some inadequate lessons. Pupils do not consistently achieve enough in lessons. The planned activities do not always challenge pupils appropriately and enable them to make best and productive use of the time available. The sequence of the planned tasks is not always thought through well enough and pupils therefore sometimes do not learn effectively during the key parts of a lesson, for example during independent and small group work. Teaching and learning are not yet consistently strong enough across the school to facilitate accelerated learning for all pupils.

There are some strengths in lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Teachers often ask good questions which require pupils to give extended answers rather than accepting a pupil's initial response; this effectively develops pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers are mostly clear about what it is they want pupils to learn and they are planning in more detail for different groups. This has improved since the last inspection.

There have been improvements in the way pupils' progress is assessed and monitored. This is providing teachers with a clear analysis about whether or not their pupils are reaching the levels they are expected to. Teachers are finding this information helpful and are using it regularly to plan lessons rather than just using it as a summary analysis or record of progress at the end of term.

In nearly all lessons teachers are aware of the different groups of pupils, including Pakistani pupils, and ensure that they are fully engaged. Teaching assistants often make a good contribution to pupils' learning by providing targeted individual support; for example, enabling pupils who require additional support to engage more effectively during whole-class discussions.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas of improvement:

Improve the consistency and effectiveness of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last inspection the leadership and management of the school have been through an unsettled period. The governors have worked closely with the local authority and quickly appointed a new headteacher. The same person acted as an interim headteacher at the school during the spring term. This has enabled a good deal of continuity to be maintained. The local authority has appointed a very experienced headteacher to lead the school until September when the headteacher designate takes over.

There is a strong sense of shared commitment among all staff to make the necessary improvements. Despite the unsettled period, the headteacher designate has already had a very positive impact on the school. Pupils, parents, staff and governors all speak highly of the new headteacher.

Leadership roles of senior staff are much better defined. There is clear responsibility and accountability at all levels. Staff roles in raising the achievements and attainment of pupils have been established. Staff have welcomed this greater clarity. There is now regular monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders, whose skills in this aspect of their work are improving, though it is too early to have a strong positive impact on raising the quality of learning across the school. Senior leaders have undertaken a detailed diagnosis of what needs to be done but have not yet fully implemented the changes required.

The rigour of the analysis of assessment information has improved. Senior staff can now identify the many different groups of pupils in the school and check their progress. Teachers are regularly involved in discussions about how well their pupils are achieving. Senior leaders are focused on ensuring all groups of pupils achieve well and are particularly mindful to ensure that pupils of Pakistani backgrounds do not fall behind. Community initiatives have been established, in conjunction with the Comper Foundation Stage School, to make effective links with families of all backgrounds, who in the past may not have readily engaged with the school about their children's education.

The governors are suitably involved in the strategic development of the school and have developed their own governance skills through training. They are focused on supporting and challenging senior leaders. Governors have rightly raised concerns about attendance and absenteeism and their impact on pupils' achievements. Governors have kept parents and carers well informed about the progress of improvements since the last inspection. A small group of parents and carers, in

discussion with inspectors, said that they had confidence in the new headteacher and are positive about the clearer direction of the school. They are cautiously optimistic for the future but have some reservations about the variable quality of teaching.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

Improve the quality of leadership at the highest level – good

External support

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements. The local authority's personnel have provided a good range of support. In particular they have expedited the appointment of a new headteacher and worked closely with governors to establish an effective interim provision to ensure that the school continues to improve while waiting for the headteacher designate to take up post. Support for senior leaders has been good, especially in developing a more understandable approach to analysing pupils' progress and in developing their skills in judging the quality of lessons.

The impact of the local authority support is good.