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Friday 24 September 2010

Mrs Jo Lundy
St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Grove Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3BJ

Dear Mrs Lundy

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit with Lynn Lowery, additional inspector, to your school on Wednesday 22 September 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2010. 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 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 governors, the Diocesan Director of Education and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Edmundsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Wednesday 22 September 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, the literacy and numeracy coordinators, parents, the chair of governors, the diocesan director of education and a representative from the local authority. HMI conducted a staff meeting.

Context

The headteacher resigned following the March 2010 section 5 inspection. The substantive deputy headteacher had been on a secondment as an acting headteacher elsewhere in the authority since January 2009 and the literacy coordinator had been acting deputy headteacher since that time. She became acting headteacher for the first part of the summer term. A headteacher from a local high performing school took up the role of executive headteacher during the summer term. The governing body are currently seeking to appoint a new headteacher on a permanent contract. A serving teacher was appointed as the new mathematics coordinator at the beginning of the school year. New teachers have been appointed in the Year 1 and 2, Year 3, and the Year 3 and 4 classes.

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

The provisional results of the 2010 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments show that the proportion of pupils gaining the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with or just above the national and local average. However, this represents a decline in the level of the pupils' reading. The proportion of pupils securing the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics was close to the local average and above the national figure. The pupils' performance in writing was noticeably lower than in reading and mathematics.

A review of the progress made by the Year 4 2010 cohort when they left the school shows that two-thirds of the pupils were reading at Level 3b and that half of them were writing at a similar level. Three-quarters of the pupils were working at the same level in mathematics. In the 2008 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments the performance of these pupils was above average, and therefore the 2010 outcomes represent satisfactory progress. Current learning in Years 3 and 4 varies but was at least satisfactory. HMI will review pupil attainment in Years 3 and 4 in some detail at the next monitoring visit.



Progress since the last inspection:

- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 by:
 - developing expertise in teaching the subject
 - ensuring rigorous assessment which involves pupils in evaluating their own and others' progress
 - raising the expectations of pupils and the level of challenge offered in mathematics – **satisfactory**.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour and attendance continue to reflect the positive picture reported at the last inspection. Parents speak positively of the behaviour management strategies employed. During lessons with a practical element, the pupils are often the first to offer a cautionary word on the health and safety concerns that should be considered. Social relationships at lunch and break are good.

The effectiveness of provision

Inspectors observed 14 lessons. All teaching and learning was at least satisfactory. Good features were evident in all lessons, for example, outstanding learning was clear as Year 1 pupils applied their emerging phonic, sequencing and alphabetic skills to the development of a class dictionary. However, in most lessons, more emphasis was required on the learning outcomes expected, the pace of the lesson or the contributions that might be expected from support staff and volunteers. In an outstanding Year 4 poetry lesson, the pupils had been taught how to use similes, verbs and adjectives to enhance their descriptive writing. As the lesson developed, pupils were required to identify and evaluate how these had been used in the written work of their peers as an assessment for learning task. In a particularly effective plenary, these skills were brought together in a high quality question and answer session.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher has set up a regular programme of parental newsletters and coffee mornings. HMI visited one of these sessions and parents were pleased with the improvements in communication and noted that 'the headteacher is much more accessible - that is a real improvement'.

The executive headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher have formed an effective team that is embedding ambition and driving improvement. School improvement is firmly rooted in evidence; clear plans have been made to deal with the areas for improvement given in the March 2010 inspection. The senior team have done well to establish the basis of a robust assessment monitoring system where none existed previously. The data is already being used to set challenging



targets for all pupils and to identify where intervention will be needed for groups of pupils. At the time of the monitoring inspection, the database was developing well.

The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff is accurate. The executive headteacher and her deputy were invited to join inspectors in the observation of teaching and learning. The views they expressed were closely aligned with the judgements given by inspectors. The governing body has been strengthened by two new appointments and it has moved promptly to appoint a permanent headteacher.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - establishing a clear direction and high expectations across the school aimed at raising attainment
 - increasing the governing body's ability to hold leaders to account for the school's work
 - implementing a robust system to monitor and evaluate the school's work, particularly the quality of teaching, in order to better inform priorities
 - increasing capacity to improve by strengthening school development planning
 - improving the school's engagement with parents – **good**.

External support

The local authority statement of action was evaluated by HMI in Ofsted's Schools Causing Concern Team. The statement was found to 'require further development so that precise targets for raising standards were quantified in relation to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.' Although a document was submitted to HMI at the beginning of this inspection, it failed to show any material change to the original reviewed by Ofsted. Unfortunately, a 'Timeline of School Improvement' actions drawn up by the local authority and submitted to HMI on day two of the inspection contained a number of inaccuracies.

The statement of action provides for the number of days of support the local authority will make available to the school. However, greater flexibility of personnel will be required to help the school move forward. The original provision of advanced skills teacher support did not help the school move forward and too much time is allocated to the chairmanship of the local authorities Core Action Group when enhanced support for assessing pupil progress (APP) has been left under-resourced.

Priorities for further improvement

- Complete the development of a robust assessment database.

