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7 July 2011

Mrs Rachel Green
Headteacher
Brenchley and Matfield CE VA Primary School
Market Heath
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Dear Mrs Green

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Brenchley and Matfield CE VA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 March 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 – good.
Progress since the last monitoring visit – good.

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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent and the Rochester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

Increase rates of learning and progress in literacy and numeracy by:

- making sure that teachers have a shared understanding of the expectations and challenge required to ensure that all pupils make swift gains in their learning
- ensuring that support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is an established part of the school's provision
- using information from tracking pupils' progress, assessing and marking to match work consistently to pupils' needs
- ensuring pupils know their targets and how to improve their work
- planning the curriculum to build systematically upon pupils' prior experience and ensure pupils develop their computing skills
- increasing the rigour with which leaders, managers and governors monitor the school's performance in order to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of provision.

Ensure that community cohesion is effectively promoted at local, national and global levels and foster pupils' cultural awareness.

Special measures: monitoring of Brenchley and Matfield CE VA Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 July 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including 10 parts of lessons which included all class teachers. She carried out a learning walk around the school which included short visits to all classrooms to look at the pupils' books. She scrutinised documents such as assessment information, monitoring records and the minutes of governing body and local authority meetings, and had meetings with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The new headteacher has been in post since Easter. A local authority advisor continues to work full time in the school in the role of assistant headteacher.

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

Pupils' achievement continues to rise. Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at least satisfactory across the rest of the school and, as a result, an increasing number of pupils are now achieving at, or above, national expectations. There has been a significant rise in attainment in the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests, particularly in English and, compared with 2010, around 30% more pupils in English and 20% in mathematics achieved the higher Level 5.

Intervention and small group work has been carefully evaluated to make sure that it is appropriate and effective. As a result, most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress.

Systems for gathering and tracking attainment are more effective so that the information is accurate and teachers are better informed and increasingly responsible for the achievement of all pupils. In addition, there is a better shared understanding of what learning needs to take place and what that might look like in lessons. The work in pupils' books and around the school shows that there are increasing opportunities for learning to be built on from lesson to lesson, culminating in work of high quality such as the Year 4 mathematical board games. The recent focus on writing has had a positive impact across the school and a good example of this is the extended writing on 'Pirates' in Year 3. Although the rate of progress is increasingly consistent, there remain small pockets where attainment is lower than it should be. Expectations generally, especially for more able pupils, are not always

high enough, and there are still too few opportunities for pupils to take the initiative and extend their learning. The quality of presentation and handwriting in Key Stage 2 classes is sometimes good but not yet consistent enough.

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

- increase rates of learning and progress in literacy and numeracy – **good**.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are generally good. The school is much more cohesive, celebratory and cooperative and there are increasing opportunities for pupils to have a positive influence and take responsibility for others. When pupils have these responsibilities, they show that they are capable and sensible.

The effectiveness of provision

The vast majority of the teaching seen during the visit was satisfactory and just over half was good; however, the proportion of good teaching is not yet sufficient to ensure that progress is rapid or consistent enough. Despite this, several positive aspects seen on the last visit are now becoming embedded, such as well-organised lessons with increasingly well-focused objectives and steps for learning. For the most part the pupils understand what is expected of them and what successful learning will look like. Teaching assistants generally provide effective additional support but, during the visit, there were examples of small group work in early reading and phonics where the activities were rather limited. Nonetheless, the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs indicates that quality of support has improved through a better match of activities to different abilities in class, more effective targeted support and more effective partnerships with outside agencies. The quality of the school and classrooms as environments which support and celebrate the learning is also improving well.

Teachers are using assessment more effectively and lesson planning increasingly takes account of what pupils already know. This is particularly effective when lessons are linked across subjects or which build up over time. Teachers' marking has also improved because of the links between their written comments and the sharper objectives and success criteria. This remains an area for further development, however, because many of the written comments are still too imprecise to be helpful and there is little evidence, in the majority of classes, that the pupils are given time or expected to respond to the prompts and challenges set.

No outstanding lessons were seen during the visit, nor are any recorded in the school's own monitoring. This is because most lessons are safe rather than inspiring. There is more to do to meet the needs of more-able pupils and to take account of

the interests of the pupils in everyday learning. The development of skills and knowledge is not consistent because the curriculum is not planned coherently across the school. There is, however, encouraging evidence of attempts to make the curriculum more relevant and interesting and there are good examples of improving the quality of learning by linking the learning across different subjects, as seen in Year 4's work on the rainforest. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to explore different cultures and examples of real-life experiences being used as a springboard to stimulate learning, such as the Year 1 and 2 writing arising from their visit to Drusilla's park.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher has been in place for a relatively short time, and has hit the ground galloping. She has a very clear view of the strengths and the shortcomings of the school and is supported well by the other senior leaders. Quite rightly, the focus remains on improving the quality of classroom teaching. Establishing team working and following up monitoring with individual coaching has proved effective in most cases and these approaches are now being used to develop the effectiveness and influence of curriculum leaders. This is an aspect which is currently underdeveloped. The governing body is now providing consistent and coherent support and is developing its ability to challenge and hold the school appropriately to account.

The cohesion of the school community itself is much improved and providing a much stronger platform for the school to re-emerge into the local and wider world. This is supported by the development of valuable partnerships with other schools, local churches, different ethnic communities, and most importantly, parents.

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

- increasing the rigour with which leaders, managers and governors monitor the school's performance in order to bring about sustainable improvements in the quality of provision – **good**.
- ensure that community cohesion is effectively promoted at local, national and global levels and foster pupils' cultural awareness – **good**.

External support

In the late autumn term, the local authority took steps to ensure that there was effective leadership and management. This established clarity of purpose, shared expectations, accurate assessment and a strong foundation for further improvement. It has also carried out the monitoring and evaluation role effectively and enabled the new headteacher to establish links with the local education community. As the school builds its own capacity to improve further, external support is rightly decreasing.