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30 June 2011

Mrs E Tayler
Headteacher
Cottingham Church of England School
Berryfield Road
Market Harborough
LE16 8XB

Dear Mrs Tayler

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cottingham Church of England School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 June 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 second 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 second monitoring inspection on 28 June 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

One class teacher has been absent ill since the last monitoring visit. Since Easter, this class has been taught by an experienced teacher who has returned from a career break.

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

Teachers assess and record pupils' performance regularly. They now use specific criteria to review pupils' progress and note when these have been achieved on sheets kept in pupils' English and mathematics books. This approach has recently been extended to include science. The information is increasingly used by teachers to refine lesson planning and to match work to pupils' needs. However, the quality of this planning, although improved, is still inconsistent and work does not always challenge more-able pupils sufficiently or is too hard for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school's assessment information indicates that attainment for Year 6 pupils is on track to match or slightly exceed that of 2010, especially in mathematics. If national test results for Year 6 pupils confirm the school's assessment then attainment is broadly average. Children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage have knowledge, understanding and skills which are broadly average for their age, although writing is a weaker aspect for a small number of boys.

The school's assessment information indicates that Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory progress from the end of Year 5, although it is not as strong from the end of Year 2. They make better progress in mathematics than in English. Across other years, pupils' progress varies from good to satisfactory. However, it is often less rapid in reading than in writing and mathematics. Although the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress is increasing, it is not high enough to ensure that pupils make good progress overall.

In lessons, pupils show mainly positive attitudes to learning. They settle to work promptly and most listen well. However, a few lose concentration when they are expected to listen for long periods or if they are not sufficiently clear what they are expected to do. Pupils collaborate well in pairs and small groups and enjoy sharing

their ideas. They increasingly respond well to teachers' questions; they try to explain their ideas and answer in greater detail. They are becoming more confident in assessing their own work.

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

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

In discussions, pupils are positive about the school and say that it has improved over the year. They enjoy the good range of additional activities, including educational visits, and the regular visitors. They particularly enjoyed inviting fathers into school to help celebrate Fathers' Day. Older pupils are proud of the range of responsibilities they take on to help the school run smoothly, for example as playground leaders, organising recycling activities and setting up assemblies. Pupils mostly behave well and respond appropriately to teachers' instructions. Their attendance remains above average.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching is improving. More good teaching was seen during this visit but the majority remains satisfactory and reflects the satisfactory progress made by most pupils. Teachers routinely share learning objectives with pupils and, increasingly, they involve them in developing criteria by which they will know when they have been successful. On occasions, these criteria are clearly linked to the different levels at which pupils are working. For example, Year 6 pupils evaluated the level at which they were working in mathematics using criteria they had discussed earlier in the lesson.

Since the last monitoring visit, in conjunction with local authority staff, the school has provided training for teachers on guided group work, using questions effectively, improving marking and introducing 'learning logs'. As a result, teachers now use a wider range of questions to develop pupils' thinking and to encourage them to explain their ideas. For example, Year 2 pupils were challenged to explain what they knew about the key features of two-dimensional shapes before applying this knowledge to explore three-dimensional shapes.

Teachers' marking now focuses more sharply on how pupils might improve their work. While there is still some variation across classes, teachers increasingly give pupils' specific targets for improvement and are beginning to challenge pupils with extension questions or practice of particular skills. However, it is not always clear where and how pupils respond to these prompts. This improvement in target setting has been supported by the introduction this term of 'learning logs' in which pupils record the next steps they need to make in their learning at the end of each week.

They take the log home to share with their parents or carers, who may then encourage or help them to practise the skills they have identified. Pupils are very positive about the logs and say that the extra practice helps to build their confidence.

Pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn through broader themes. For example, in the recent Second World War theme, pupils applied mathematical skills when planning and buying ingredients for cookies before using accurate measuring skills in cooking. Pupils also used writing skills in different contexts but teachers' marking of this thematic work is not as rigorous as it is in English. Close review of pupils' progress is increasingly used to identify pupils who need additional support and to tailor that support to tackle particular areas of weakness.

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

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to set a clear direction and high expectations for the school. She uses the regular monitoring of performance and review of pupils' progress to inform the concise action plans which are carefully focused on the main priority areas for improvement. The headteacher has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has initiated regular and relevant training for staff. She evaluates the implementation and impact of new approaches through a range of monitoring activities including scrutiny of pupils' work and 'learning walks' in classrooms. She reports on this progress to the governing body whose members increasingly visit the school to see developments directly and meet with pupils. They now ask challenging and relevant questions in meetings to check how well the school is performing.

A wider range of teachers now have responsibilities for subjects or aspects of the school's work. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has reverted to an experienced teacher who returned from a career break at Easter. However, most of the roles are relatively newly established and teachers are in the early stages of developing leadership expertise. Teachers receive support and training from local authority staff and are beginning to develop action plans for their areas of responsibility. Those who have held their roles for longer than this term have monitored aspects of work such as how teachers use pupil-progress sheets in mathematics or the effectiveness of marking. These teachers are beginning to take on greater accountability for the quality of provision and outcomes in their areas. However, the headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, provides the main impetus for improvement and detailed evaluation of performance.

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

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

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support and training which is well focused on the school's priorities for improvement. A consultant has worked closely with teachers in developing better marking, improving guided group work and making marking more helpful for pupils. She has also assisted subject leaders in monitoring the quality of pupils' work and teachers' planning. The school's partnership with another local school provides good opportunities for teachers to observe different practice and to plan jointly with other staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure greater consistency in the recent developments in teaching and assessment, especially in the teaching of reading.