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8 July 2011

Ms Kerri Burns  
The Headteacher  
Pells Church of England Primary School  
Landport Road  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 2SU

Dear Ms Burns

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pells Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – inadequate.

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, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Diocesan Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009**

- Raise achievement and standards, and improve the quality of teaching and learning, by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and recorded, and this information used to:
  - monitor how well pupils are doing
  - plan the next steps in learning for pupils of different ages and abilities, so that all are appropriately challenged, especially the more able.
- Develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards.

### **Additional areas for improvement identified in previous monitoring visits**

- Increase the impact of work to ensure all pupils attend regularly by helping parents and carers understand the impact of poor attendance on their children's achievement and life chances.
- Rapidly increase the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 by:
  - ensuring high quality staff are in place
  - clarifying the actions being taken to improve teaching so everyone involved knows what their contribution is and the impact can be checked
  - simplifying the outcomes from monitoring of teaching to provide unequivocal feedback for staff about what needs to improve.
- Improve Key Stage 2 pupils' ability to improve their own work.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Pells Church of England Primary School**

### **Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher, other staff in positions of responsibility, a group of pupils, the Chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

The executive headteacher continues to work in the school for two days per week. Teaching in one class is provided by a teacher on a temporary contract. She joined the school five weeks ago, taking over after a number of short-term arrangements to cover for the long-term absence of the substantive teacher. Since the last monitoring inspection a teacher from the executive headteacher's school has provided support for underachieving pupils, a senior leader from another nearby school has provided training for one teacher and staff have begun joint curriculum planning with another local school.

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

Pupils' achievement is improving, particularly among younger pupils, but remains inadequate because older pupils are not yet making enough progress to reverse past underachievement.

Continued improvement in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that children make good and accelerating progress in lessons and over time. From starting points which are often below those expected, the great majority of boys and girls attain the expected levels of development by the time they join Year 1. In lessons children settle naturally into their learning, adopting productive routines and showing enthusiasm for learning. Progress continues to gain momentum in Years 1 and 2. Most pupils now sustain their focus on learning in lessons and are more aware of what they are trying to achieve. Unvalidated results of Key Stage 1 assessments show Year 2 pupils have made good progress this year. Their attainment in reading is in line with that seen nationally and in mathematics it is a little below average. Writing is the weakest area and attainment is below average.

Improving teaching in Key Stage 2 means pupils are making better progress in lessons, but this has come too late for those in Year 6. Results of the recent unvalidated national assessment tests are below average in English and well below average in mathematics, showing that pupils underachieved in English and significantly underachieved in mathematics. Inadequate past teaching has left gaps

in knowledge and understanding, especially in mathematics. Pupils are more aware of their targets in English and mathematics because they are now more regularly referred to in lessons and in teachers' marking. They are beginning to think more about how to achieve their targets and show greater independence, but still lack confidence in moving their work forward. The presentation of work has improved, notably in writing. However, in mathematics, pupils do not make enough progress as their work continues to lack clarity in different aspects of the subject so they can re-visit their learning and teachers can see where the gaps are.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make overall progress in line with their peers. They make good progress up to Year 2 because of closely-tailored support and careful assessment. Older pupils' progress is more variable because additional support is not always planned well enough to meet their needs.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- enhance Key Stage 2 pupils' ability to improve their own work – satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Most pupils continue to behave well around the site, are welcoming to visitors and take pride in their school. In the main they enjoy positive relationships with each other, showing they understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are keen to take on the wider range of responsibilities now available, such as the gardening club or preparing for a parade. Older pupils led the singing well in assembly and set a good example to younger ones. Pupils understand well the value of healthy eating and taking exercise. They were able to explain why they eat fruit at snack time. Behaviour in lessons is improving with Early Years Foundation Stage children showing good social and emotional development. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 now follow expected routines. In older years lessons are usually calm and pupils want to learn. There continues to be low-level restlessness and lack of engagement when pupils are not clear about the purpose of their work, or their interest is not captured and held. A small minority of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour and staff and additional adults work well to modify this over time. Attendance remains low and is hampering pupils' achievement. The school has taken some appropriate steps to improve it, including working with families and other agencies such as educational welfare. It is beginning to fine parents and carers over avoidable absences, but recognises it has not made an impact on the amount of time lost. Pupils know the school wants to raise attendance and understand why, but would like more recognition when they attend well.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the impact of work to ensure all pupils attend regularly by helping parents and carers understand the impact of poor attendance on their children's achievement and life chances – inadequate.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of children's experiences in the Reception/Year 1 class has improved further. There are outstanding features in the assessment of children's progress and the engaging activities planned to build their learning. Additional adults provide outstanding support when working with individual pupils. They make a good impact when working with small groups but occasionally do not fully extend or confirm their learning. Links are growing with local nursery providers to ensure effective progression for children on joining the school. In the Year 1/2 class, staff plan lessons well around pupils' needs and check the progress made. Pupils' targets are regularly referred to so pupils are beginning to be more independent in deciding how to reach them. Some opportunities are missed to challenge more-able pupils, for example in discussions, and to ensure they understand the higher level of work expected.

Teaching for older pupils is improving but is not yet consistently good enough. In the Year 3/4 class, greater stability in staffing and more effective management of lessons is leading to better progress. Teaching in the Year 5/6 class now pays closer attention to pupils' attainment by providing challenging activities. Assessment information is broadly accurate in English, but is not fully reliable in mathematics. Staff are working well to remedy this but it means lesson tasks do not consistently build pupils' learning or develop their confidence. In lessons, teachers usually use whole-class phases to explain to pupils what to do, but do not always check that pupils know why they are completing their work or how secure their understanding is of the key ideas. Where teachers or other adults work closely with individual pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, they make more impact because they test pupils' understanding and address any weaknesses.

Intervention to support underachieving pupils through small-group withdrawal work is usually targeted well. Nevertheless, its impact is mixed and has not built further on the promising start. Where staff leading these activities understand their purpose and how to move learning forward the impact is good. However, this is not always evident and the sessions seen on this visit did not achieve as much as they should.

Teachers' marking is more regular. It usually identifies strengths and weaknesses for pupils but does not always refer enough to what they need to do to reach their targets.

Good progress has been made in ensuring that the curriculum is more interesting and that statutory requirements in areas such as science are covered. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed recent initiatives like science week. They are interested in new themes such as 'The Iron Man' in Year 3/4. Staff are benefitting from sharing ideas with colleagues from a partner school to plan next year's curriculum. Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics are underdeveloped. A much wider range of clubs is available and these are boosting

their enjoyment of school. For example, members of the film club were keen to show their first on-line film reviews.

The school has improved the level of care for the complex learning needs and family circumstances affecting a significant minority of pupils. Effective work with external partners such as social services, and internal provision including nurture groups, ensure exclusions are low and that pupils feel safe at school.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that pupils' progress is regularly and accurately assessed and recorded, and this information used to monitor their progress and plan challenging next steps in learning for all, especially the more able – satisfactory
- develop planning, assessment and resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage to fully reflect the different areas of learning and rapidly bring about improvements in the provision – good.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The headteacher and senior colleagues are developing their ability to move the school forward but know achievement and attendance must improve faster. Work with other schools and with the executive headteacher is crucial to improvement, but the school leaders are increasingly taking the initiative more. Leaders worked hard to improve Key Stage 2 teaching by appointing new staff and through training. Good use is being made of colleagues from partner schools and of the skills of strong staff to model good practice. The monitoring of teaching has improved through focusing more closely on the vital aspects of lessons and involving the deputy headteacher. Feedback to staff is clearer but does not systematically refer back to each teacher's previously identified areas for improvement when evaluating lessons. The monitoring of intervention sessions is not comprehensive enough to ensure this is useful. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have developed their work further in curriculum development and the monitoring of pupils' progress. Improving the assessment of mathematics is a major focus and there are good plans to bring this about. Subject leadership across the wider curriculum is underdeveloped.

Strategic planning has improved. It identifies more succinctly the pressing areas for improvement, notably teaching and attendance. However, it is not always clear what steps are required to achieve the long-term goals or how progress will be checked. Governors have received useful training on how to interpret pupil assessment data. Year 6 pupils' disappointing test results have sharply focused governors' attention on checking pupils' achievement more robustly. They are working hard to support the school but are starting to challenge leaders in a useful way as well.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop the role of subject leaders in identifying and addressing weaknesses in their subjects so that they play a full part in improving achievement and standards – satisfactory
- rapidly increase the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 by:
  - ensuring high quality staff are in place
  - clarifying the actions being taken to improve teaching so everyone involved knows what their contribution is and the impact can be checked
  - simplifying the outcomes from monitoring of teaching to provide unequivocal feedback for staff about what needs to improve – satisfactory.

### **External support**

Support from the local authority has made a satisfactory impact since the last monitoring inspection and has helped stabilise teaching in Key Stage 2. Visits by the link officer are regular and monitoring is largely accurate. However, support to improve attendance has yet to bring benefits and new admissions to the school do not always take enough account of the school's vulnerable position by placing children with complex learning needs.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

No further priorities have been set at this time.