

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Serco**
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct T** 0121 683 3888



13 October 2011

Mrs Richardson
Headteacher
The Saint Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Boston
Wyberton Low Road
Boston
PE21 7RZ

Dear Mrs Richardson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Saint Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Boston

Following my visit with Patrick Cook, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 October 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 on 30 March 2011. 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

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed to the school at this time, although this decision will be reviewed at subsequent visits.

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 Lincolnshire and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

David Martin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the proportion of good lessons and eliminating inadequate practice
 - ensuring the accuracy of assessment with teachers rigorously using this information to plan next steps of learning
 - improving teachers' knowledge of progression in learning in English and mathematics
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - ensuring feedback clearly identifies the good features of work, how pupils can improve, and provides time for them to respond to the feedback given.

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - appointing a leader to drive improvement in this stage of education developing staff knowledge of a good Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and the place of observational assessment in planning children's learning maximising opportunities for developing children's skills in reading, writing, calculating, and shape, space and measures across all areas of learning
 - ensuring there is an appropriate balance between teacher-led, child-chosen and indoor and outdoor learning
 - improving the quality of both indoor and outdoor environments, including learning resources.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - all leaders taking responsibility for ensuring pupils' good progress and high achievement
 - establishing rigorous monitoring and evaluating systems which include regular reviews of planning and pupils' work
 - agreeing aspirational targets for pupils which are used to ensure staff accountability
 - developing the role of the governing body in challenging underperformance and becoming more directly involved in the school's work.

Special measures: monitoring of The Saint Thomas' Church of England Primary School, Boston

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 11 October 2011

Evidence

Inspectors looked into all aspects of the school's work, observed all teaching staff and scrutinised planning and other documents. They met with the headteacher and senior staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and spoke to some parents and carers.

Context

An executive headteacher was appointed for a two-year period from May 2011. Eight other teaching staff were recruited to fill vacancies for September 2011, out of a teaching complement of 14. Three of these are members of the new senior leadership team. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body are also new to post. There has been considerable change to the facilities and resources available in the Reception unit, including a grass extension to the outdoor space.

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

The historical performance of pupils at the school, as measured by national tests and teacher assessment, has been inadequate. Attainment by the end of Year 6 for the last four years has been significantly below national averages and declined further in 2011. Attainment in mathematics has been particularly weak. By the end of Year 2, pupils have also attained standards significantly below average. Although there was some small improvement in 2010, results overall fell again in 2011. As pupils have started school with knowledge and skills a little below those expected for their age, this means that they have made inadequate progress as they moved through the school.

The great majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good or better in terms of the quality of learning and the progress made by the pupils. One lesson was outstanding and the remainder were satisfactory. In a small minority of lessons, there was less secure teaching leading to missed opportunities for securing effective learning. This is a significant improvement on the quality of teaching and learning seen at the last inspection and broadly matches the senior leaders' current monitoring of classroom practice. However, this inspection took place very early in the term. Consequently, it is difficult at this time for the school to be able to show the full impact of improved teaching on pupils' attainment over time. After the initial and subsequent periodic collection and moderation of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress, the school should be in a better position to demonstrate improved outcomes.

Marking is remarkably regular and consistent, given the changes to staffing. The 'bubble and block' approach is used throughout the school and gives pupils effective feedback on how to improve their work. Pupils are often given opportunities to respond to this feedback or to act on the advice given. As this approach progresses, marking can be linked to National Curriculum levels for the older pupils. Planning is also consistently good with most teachers annotating and adapting their plans to match the work carefully to the needs of individuals or groups of pupils. The delivery of work to these plans, however, is implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness. Most pupils report that they are enjoying their lessons this year, although they recognise that more is being expected of them. The quality and quantity of work seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of books is good at this early stage, with a great deal of care taken with presentation.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in English and mathematics – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The leadership of the Reception unit has been secured. An experienced Early Years Foundation Stage manager is in post, working closely with a highly effective teacher in a Reception class who provides strong day-to-day leadership in the unit. The headteacher also takes a great personal interest and the unit is central to whole-school planning and future development.

Teaching is always securely satisfactory and is often good and inspirational. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of effective practice and the curriculum is already good due to the expertise recently brought into the school through changes to staffing and leadership. There has been very helpful support from a local partner school and the local authority 'Birth to Five' services. As a result, there is already an appropriate, well-constructed curriculum in place that addresses all the required areas of learning well. Leaders and managers are already reviewing and fine-tuning the provision in the light of the first few weeks of operation.

The Reception unit has been transformed over the summer. The school has invested in a grassy outdoor area to complement the existing outdoor space. This provides opportunities for the creative study of nature. During the inspection, it was used very effectively to produce a real sense of discovery, awe and wonder in the children. More than this, the work was very well linked to classroom phonics work, listening, speaking and mark-making (early writing) skills – a truly memorable experience for the children. Indoor resources have also been renewed and revitalised. There is a good balance in planning and delivery between teacher-led work and activities chosen by children. Teachers and support staff are skilled at

shaping and sensitively directing this child-centred work so that children maximise their learning, particularly in developing speaking and communication skills. The variety and range of experiences offered ensure that the children have opportunities to develop in all areas of learning, including their physical and fine motor skills. Adults use effective systems to assess the progress that children are making and this is being captured in attractively presented and informative 'learning logs'.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage - good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher has brought a clear vision, ambition and extensive experience to the school. She has also brought clear-sighted strategic planning skills to bear on the helpful milestones provided in the local authority statement of action. The successful recruitment of high quality teachers and leaders has meant that the school has been able to establish strong systems and structures in a very short space of time. Good support has been provided for leadership from the partner National Leaders in Education (NLE) and the school, brokered through the local authority.

As a result of this rapid leadership development in the school, there has been a strong focus on assessing strengths in teaching and learning and in developing individual teachers' skills and expertise. In a short space of time, the team has established a thorough monitoring programme that includes lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning. Feedback to teachers from this monitoring is encouraging and developmental whilst making school expectations clear to all staff. Inspection evidence showed that the outcomes from monitoring and evaluation were being adopted by teachers to help them improve classroom delivery. This has led to a notable consistency of practice this term.

Sound assessment systems have been put into place, with realistic but challenging targets for improved pupil attainment and accelerated pupil progress. The first pupil progress meetings, where teachers and managers will reflect on progress made by all pupils in each class, are planned for later in the term. At that stage, the school will know whether the strong management systems and recent changes to practice are having a noticeable impact on pupils' outcomes. It will also enable leaders and managers to make teaching staff more aware of the progress of individual pupils and to identify which pupils may need further support and intervention in order to achieve their potential.

The local authority has temporarily withdrawn the delegated budget from the governing body. Governors have not previously been sufficiently well-informed or proactive in holding school managers to account. They are now aware of what their

role in school improvement should be and receive good information from the executive headteacher with regard to the priorities facing the school. There is a planned programme of extensive support from the local authority to help them to fulfil their roles more effectively.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory

External support

There are already several references in the paragraphs above to the effective support provided to the school by the local authority, partner school and NLE headteacher. The local authority statement of action is accurate and well focused on the priorities for development. The actions identified remain appropriate and helpful to the school and the 'milestones' set out in the action plan are a useful marker for school leaders and managers to measure the progress made. This support will continue, but it is already clear that there is confidence in the executive headteacher to manage this support and increasingly build capacity to improve within her own senior team and staff.