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Mr Dean Buckland
Headteacher
Burton Church of England Primary School
Campbell Road
Christchurch
BH23 7JY

Dear Mr Buckland

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Burton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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

Newly Qualified Teachers may not 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 Diocese, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Dorset.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

■ Improve the quality of leadership and management by:

- sharpening evaluation, so that it sets a clear direction for improvement
- developing teamwork so that all staff share a common vision and ambition
- rigorously monitoring the work of the school to ensure that all teachers are implementing agreed actions for improvement.

■ Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that there is no inadequate teaching and over 60% is good by December 2011 through:

- making better use of assessment information to plan lessons that are challenging and well matched to the needs of all pupils
- improving the quality of marking and the use of targets to give better guidance and raise pupils' expectations of what they can achieve
- using the best teachers as role models to improve the consistency of teaching throughout the school.

■ Develop the curriculum by:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects
- writing plans that show specific skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects so that pupils can build on these systematically and accelerate their progress.

Special measures: monitoring of Burton Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 October 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, a group of teachers, support staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The inspector spoke informally to a few parents and carers at the start of the school day and to a group of pupils. Nine part lessons were observed. The inspector looked at reports from the local authority, minutes from meetings held by the governing body and the school's documentation and practice related to the safeguarding of children. The school's data as well as published data were also taken into account.

Context

The newly appointed headteacher took up his post in September 2011. Following the departure of two class teachers, one of whom was the very experienced Reception Year leader, the school appointed two new teachers. Three members of the governing body resigned since the last visit. The local authority and the Diocese assisted the school in finding new and additional members. Consequently, there are now six new members on the governing body. The school has been through a process of redundancies among the support staff.

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

More children than in most schools nationally continue to attain levels within and above those expected for their age by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. However, a lack of thoroughness in the use of assessment information from the Early Years Foundation Stage contributes to the underachievement of some pupils in Year 1. This is particularly the case for the more able. Levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 were broadly average at the end of the summer term 2011. However, these had dipped in writing and in mathematics compared with levels in 2010. Parents and carers with children in the infant classes, who spoke to the inspector during this visit, shared the view that they have already noticed improvements with their children's reading.

Levels of attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2011 show some improvements since the previous year, particularly in English. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average, and the school's data indicate that pupils attained significantly above the Dorset County average in writing. The school has correctly identified the need to accelerate pupils' achievement in mathematics and to provide more challenge, particularly for those pupils of higher ability in mathematics, as well

as in reading. Despite older pupils making satisfactory and, at times, good progress in mathematics, there are significant gaps in their learning and in their knowledge of key vocabulary. This is mainly due to their prior underachievement. Children in the Reception Year learn very quickly how to estimate and to count accurately; they also learn to compare lengths that are longer and shorter and to sort shapes. However, these skills are not always built on sufficiently well so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable as they progress through the rest of the school. Nevertheless, some of the older pupils say that they have noticed that their lessons are 'getting harder'.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Most pupils behave well. Incidences of undesirable behaviour and the effectiveness with which issues have been resolved are now recorded in detail. Some pupils commented perceptively that when pupils misbehave, it is at times because they are either 'bored in lessons', feel tired or are hungry. Pupils, including those whose circumstances are likely to make them most vulnerable, say they feel happy and safe in school. They are confident that most staff will help them to resolve minor disagreements.

Assemblies contribute to improving pupils' knowledge and appreciation of other faiths. Changes made to the curriculum have created more opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. The school recognises nonetheless that these remain areas for development.

The school's firm stance about pupil absence and holidays taken during term time is leading to improved levels of attendance. However, attendance is still broadly average.

The effectiveness of provision

Positive characteristics of teaching observed included opportunities for pupils to engage in practical and investigative activities and time in lessons for them to work collaboratively and talk about their work. Furthermore, with the exception of mathematics, learning is now put into a more meaningful context using a thematic or topic approach. However, while most teachers provide pupils with clear instructions, these often focus pupils more on activities than on knowledge and skills. Teachers make better use of questions, but they often accept answers from pupils that are too brief, without asking pupils to explain the reasons for their answers. There is a greater focus on key words and this is seen in the displays in classrooms which highlight specific vocabulary, for example in mathematics. However, these are still not used routinely enough by pupils and many continue to struggle to use the correct spelling of key words confidently; for example, when describing the different properties of shapes. Guided reading sessions now include activities related to reading for all pupils. However, the lack of detailed planning for

these sessions limits the value added to pupils' reading skills. This is particularly the case for those pupils working independently or with an additional adult who has not been provided with sufficient guidance about how best to support and extend pupils' learning. In the least effective lessons, expectations of what pupils could achieve were too low. In some cases, pupils did not know what they were supposed to be learning or how they could help themselves. In these lessons, teachers did not check on pupils' progress at regular intervals and therefore were not sufficiently responsive to pupils' needs. Some teachers spend too much time talking while pupils sit patiently and passively.

Most teachers now make better use of assessment information to plan work for groups of pupils of different ability. There is a greater consistency in the way teachers plan, but the learning intentions are not always precise and still do not promote sufficient progression of skills. The lack of clarity in some planning, about the expected learning outcomes, limits the potential for teachers to assess learning and progress accurately during and after lessons. Pupils say they appreciate teachers' helpful comments in their books, especially about how they can improve further. However, not all teachers mark pupils' work consistently well or in a way that celebrates pupils' achievement and identifies the next steps in learning.

There has been targeted professional development and support for some teachers. However, the school has not made best use of its good and outstanding practitioners to help secure good quality teaching across the school. Support staff recognise the need for them to receive training on the effective use of new technologies, including the interactive whiteboards. They would also welcome feedback about their work and how they could further improve their effectiveness.

Pupils appreciate the new laptops and say they would welcome greater access to technology to support them with their mathematics, reading and writing during lessons. The school has a new programme of work to support the curriculum. This provides staff with guidance about how to promote the progression of skills. However, not all staff make best use of this information to inform their daily planning.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that there is no inadequate teaching and over 60% is good by December 2011 – satisfactory
- Develop the curriculum – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher is building systematically on the work of the former acting headteacher. In the few weeks since his arrival, he has already helped to instil in

staff the confidence in his ability to lead and manage the school effectively. He is working with the staff to set a clear direction for improvement. There is, for example, more rigorous systems in place to monitor the effectiveness of the school's work and, as a result, self-evaluation is now more accurate. Together with staff, the headteacher is using tracking systems to identify pupils in need of additional support. However, comparative judgements about the progress of different groups of pupils are not being made. The headteacher undertakes classroom observations, but individual teachers are not held closely to account for the progress their pupils make.

Staff are beginning to share a common vision and senior leaders are starting to work more effectively as a team. The special educational needs coordinator and the literacy leader in particular, make a positive contribution to the senior leadership team and have helped to bring about improvements in the school. This is evident in the better outcomes for pupils with their writing and the greater consistency in the planning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The leader for mathematics has produced an action plan and is contributing to the evaluation of this aspect of the school's work. However, this is not yet having an impact on raising levels of attainment. Not all senior and middle leaders are contributing to driving and embedding improvement, and they have not all produced action plans aimed at helping to raise levels of attainment in their areas of responsibility. The governing body is still not challenging the school enough about the progress being made by different groups of pupils. The governing body has been in a state of flux and only a very small minority are high profile in the school. There is an over reliance on the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body to drive improvement and this limits the school's capacity to sustain and accelerate progress.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management – satisfactory

External support

The quality and impact of the external support provided for the school has been satisfactory. The local authority and the Diocese have assisted the school with the appointment of additional members of the governing body. The support provided by local authority officers has contributed to some of the improvements in writing as well as teachers' planning. The former acting headteacher supported the redundancy process in a way that helped to maintain staff morale. However, the external support to help accelerate progress has been limited. Reports from local authority officers, although more evaluative, do not always include clear judgements about the quality of its work, including about the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. Where judgements are made, these are not always shared with the school in good time.