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10 November 2011

Mrs K Weston
St James' CofE Primary School
Vicarage Road
Hereford
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Dear Mrs Weston

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St James' CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Alan Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 November 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 fourth 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 – 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 Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Herefordshire and the Diocesan Director of Education for Hereford.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase attainment and rates of progress, especially in writing and mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school
 - ensuring better use of assessment information to challenge and support all pupils to do their best
 - developing more effective systems for tracking pupils' progress in order that underperformance can be more quickly identified and remedied
 - improving the quality of written feedback to pupils so that they are clearer about what they need to do to improve their work.

- Improve the quality and rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to develop clear plans for realistic and measurable improvement.

- Address the issue of inadequate outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by September 2010.

Special measures: monitoring of St James' CofE Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 November 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, members of the governing body and an officer from the local authority.

Context

Since the third monitoring visit, the newly appointed deputy headteacher has taken up her post. There is now a substantive teacher for each class in the school.

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

National assessment data for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 at the end of the summer term 2011 show an improvement in attainment compared with the school's previous performance. Standards have risen in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 2 and in English for pupils in Year 6. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is in line with the national average for these cohorts of pupils. However, school data indicate that there is a continuing legacy of under-attainment in writing in Years 3, 4 and 5, and in mathematics in Year 3.

National progress measures indicate that the majority of the 2010/11 cohort of Year 6 pupils made the progress expected of pupils of their age based on their attainment at the end of Year 2. However, the school's own data show that progress during the past year was too slow for the majority of these pupils. The school's own data indicate that the majority of pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 made expected progress in writing and mathematics during the past academic year, but progress remains inconsistent throughout the school and other year groups performed less well. Progress during the past year was slowest in mathematics in Year 3 and Year 6, and in writing in Year 6. A minority of pupils are still not making sufficient progress to make up for underachievement in the past.

Although pupils made good progress in half of the lessons observed during the inspection, in too many lessons pupils still do not make sufficiently rapid progress to enable them to make up for underachievement in the past. The school's detailed analysis of pupils' progress indicates that intervention work is targeted well and is successfully accelerating the progress made by lower-achieving pupils. The one-to-one support for specific pupils is particularly effective.

Progress in pupils' writing, as seen in their books, is variable. It is good in Years 3 and 5, but slower in other year groups. The limited quantity and range of work

completed by pupils in Year 6 is impeding their progress. In Year 5, pupils have completed a considerable quantity of writing, covering a wide range of genres and enabling them to make good progress. The presentation of work has improved since the previous inspection, but remains inconsistent.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase attainment and rates of progress, especially in writing and mathematics – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to have positive attitudes towards their work. When teaching is most effective, pupils engage in their learning very well. However, they quickly become distracted when tasks are not matched accurately to their individual needs. They are courteous and respectful to each other and to adults.

The effectiveness of provision

The school has been successful in continuing to improve the quality of teaching. The proportion of good teaching is increasing, particularly in Reception and Years 3, 4 and 5. However, too much teaching in Years 1, 2 and 6 is not sufficiently effective to enable pupils to make the progress they are capable of.

Where teaching is most effective, learning intentions are very clear and teachers have high expectations about what the pupils should achieve. Activities are clearly focused on the planned learning and are matched well to the pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils and develop their understanding. Consequently, pupils engage well with their learning and make good progress. Even in these most effective lessons, the progress of the most able pupils is sometimes slowed when opportunities are missed to provide an additional level of challenge through in-depth questioning.

When pupils make insufficient progress, it is frequently because learning intentions are unclear and teachers have not assessed the pupils' needs accurately. As a result, teaching lacks focus and pupils are unclear about what they should be learning. When teachers model tasks, such as writing, it is not always matched well to the tasks the pupils are asked to do. Activities do not provide a logical progression of learning, and pupils are insufficiently challenged. Consequently, they are less engaged in their work.

Teaching assistants are mostly deployed well to work with small groups of pupils of different abilities. They show a clear understanding of the planned learning and ask appropriate questions of the pupils. When this is most effective, teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team. This is a significant improvement since the previous monitoring visit.

Improvements in marking are still not fully embedded throughout the school. Marking is most effective in Year 5, where clear points for improvement guide pupils to make accelerated progress. In other year groups, although marking is helpful, pupils do not benefit fully as comments and questions are not always responded to.

The outdoor area for children in Reception has been enhanced further since the previous monitoring visit. Resources are provided which engage the children well, both indoors and outdoors. Children enjoy using the new equipment, such as a large sand play area, as well as attractive resources to explore about polar regions. A good range of activities are planned for the children, although the guidance provided by adults is not consistently helpful in promoting effective learning and development. They happily choose to learn and play outdoors, even during inclement weather when they dress appropriately and clearly enjoy the outdoor environment.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Address the issue of inadequate outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by September 2010 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership team has been strengthened considerably since the previous monitoring visit with the appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher. There is now a suitably structured leadership team with clearly defined responsibilities. Monitoring and evaluation processes are securely in place with full involvement of the senior leadership team. The raising achievement plan has been enhanced with additional detail about planned actions. The newly appointed English and mathematics subject leaders have prepared appropriate improvement plans. These are fully informed by outcomes of the school's monitoring and evaluation work. In most respects, they are of good quality, although they do not include sufficient detail about the professional development that is needed to address the weaknesses identified in teaching. It is too early to evaluate the impact of early actions implemented by the new post-holders.

The school's assessment and tracking system is now embedded in the school's work. Data are being used well by the school's leadership team to target support which is having a positive impact on increasing rates of pupils' progress. The school has robust procedures to set challenging targets for pupils. These are being used to improve teaching and learning with mixed success. Significant increased progress is evident in Year 5, but weaknesses remain in Year 1 and Year 6. Work scrutinies carried out by members of the senior leadership team have identified accurately shortcomings in learning and progress and the school has taken decisive action to address these. The clear feedback and development points from lesson observations have been used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' rates of progress in most classes.

The governing body is now at full strength and is representative of the school community. It is provided with detailed information about the school's performance by the headteacher and is holding the school to account in a challenging, yet supportive, manner. It has a good understanding of the shortcomings in teaching.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to develop clear plans for realistic and measurable improvement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has continued to provide the school with appropriate support. It has responded quickly to requests from the school to address concerns such as the quality of teaching. It has provided further support to develop the leadership team. For example, officers have worked alongside senior leaders when carrying out lesson observations. This has contributed to their ability to make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching.