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30 November 2011

Mrs Gabbott
Headteacher
Pickhill Church of England Primary School
The Green
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North Yorkshire
YO7 4JL

Dear Mrs Gabbott

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

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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 may not be appointed until confirmed by the Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Corporate Director - Children and Young People's Service, North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



Annex

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

- Improve teaching to achieve rapid improvements in pupils' achievement throughout the school, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and in reading and writing by:
 - increasing the accountability of teachers for the progress made by pupils in their class
 - providing increased challenge for the more-able pupils
 - making sure that all teachers act fully upon the direction given by the schools leadership
 - ensuring that all lessons are well matched to the needs of all pupils
 - making sure that all teachers access pupils' work routinely during lessons
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations for how well pupils can achieve
 - developing teachers' ability to manage low-level disruption in lessons.

- Ensure the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, on securing improved performance by:
 - rapidly improving teaching so that it is consistently good or better
 - ensuring that self-evaluation is rigorous and outcomes are acted upon decisively and rapidly
 - ensuring that English and Mathematics are managed effectively.

Special measures: monitoring of Pickhill Church of England Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 29 November 2011

Evidence

During the inspection the school's work was observed, documents scrutinised and meetings took place with the Chair and a representative of the Governing Body, staff and a support adviser from the local authority.

Context

Two members of staff in this two-class school are currently absent on grounds of ill health. Their absence is being covered by supply teachers.

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

Unvalidated results of the end of Year 6 national tests in 2011, show that attainment in English and mathematics slightly exceeds the national average. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in both subjects is below those attained nationally. Attainment at the end of Year 2, particularly in reading and writing, is significantly below the national average. A legacy of ineffective teaching as pupils move through the school has resulted in gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. In the past, uneven progress has resulted in pupils not reaching the levels of attainment of which they are capable. An analysis of school-held data indicates that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are beginning to make better progress, especially within Key Stage 2. This is supported by evidence gained through lesson observations and discussions with pupils undertaken during the inspection. Pupils spoken to during the inspection reported that they enjoyed school and talked enthusiastically about their learning.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

High standards of behaviour are evident as pupils move around the school and in lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved noticeably since the previous inspection and this is one of the reasons why they are beginning to make better progress. The school is working hard to develop pupils' ability to work independently as well as cooperatively while engaged in their learning. This is beginning to be evident during lessons in both classes where an over-reliance on the teacher is diminishing.

The effectiveness of provision

Despite a period of staff instability, the quality of teaching is improving, particularly at Key Stage 2. As a consequence, pupils are beginning to make better progress. Teaching is improving because expectations of what pupils are capable of have been raised. Planning is

more precise in Key Stage 2, with increased emphasis being placed on the accurate assessment of pupils' progress during lessons. As a result lessons are becoming better matched to the needs of pupils. However, there remains further work to be done in developing teachers' assessment skills so that the strategy is embedded in all areas of the school. Teachers display effective questioning skills designed to challenge pupils during lessons and this is particularly benefiting the more able. Improvements in the quality of marking mean that pupils are given clear guidance as to what they must do to improve. However, not all pupils are able to articulate their targets in English and mathematics. On occasions, teachers spend too long during lessons talking at the pupils, leaving insufficient time for them to practise and apply their skills, and this inhibits progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are developing more-positive attitudes to learning and low-level disruption is decreasing. The initial appointment of a lead teacher to this class has had a positive influence on the quality of provision. However, planning designed to cover all the areas of learning is currently not always sufficiently clear as to what children are expected to learn. Outdoor provision is not linked closely enough to indoor activities and, therefore, opportunities to develop children's skills are often lost.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve teaching to achieve rapid improvements in pupils' achievement throughout the school, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and in reading and writing – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The time since the previous inspection has not been an easy period for the school leadership, including the governing body, as they have faced high levels of staff absence at a crucial moment in the school's development. Although this has influenced the overall rate of progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement, it has not lessened the school's resolve to do so. The headteacher and the governing body are aware that their immediate priority must be to secure, in the long term, the quality and consistency of teaching and learning on a permanent basis. This is a matter of urgency, particular in regard to the provision in Early Years Foundation Stage / Key Stage 1. School leaders have taken action since the previous inspection and are working closely with the local authority in order to bring this about. In order to support the development of classroom practice and accelerate pupils' progress, the headteacher has now increased the amount of her time devoted to supporting learning in the classroom. While this is overdue, it is proving to be a constructive move and is why improvements in teaching and learning are beginning to emerge. It also provides the headteacher with an opportunity to evaluate the provision of English and mathematics effectively for which she has had to assume responsibility due to staff absence. Current staff support this style of leadership and are keen to implement changes to the way classrooms are organised and lessons delivered. Systems to monitor pupils' progress are now in place. This enables underachievement to be quickly identified and appropriate support to be given. The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and has introduced regular pupil-performance reviews in order to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils are making. The headteacher and the governing body have an

understanding of what needs to be improved based on the findings of the previous inspection and an action plan designed to secure improvement is in place and being pursued. However, a rigorous, regular and systematic process of self-evaluation, in order to identify where improvements are required in all aspects of the school, is underdeveloped. Where action plans are in place there is insufficient focus on how initiatives are to enhance pupil outcomes. The governing body is very supportive of the work of the school but needs to challenge the headteacher more, holding her to account in order to ensure that the pace of improvement reflects a sense of urgency and is sustained over time.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, on securing improved performance – satisfactory.

External support

The quality and impact of the support provided by the local authority are good, particularly through the deployment of consultants to support developments in classroom practice. The action plan produced by the authority is appropriate and fit for purpose.