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24 February 2012

Mrs Gabbott
Headteacher
Pickhill Church of England Primary School
The Green
Pickhill
Thirsk
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 23 February 2012, 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 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

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 and the Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



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 assess 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 second monitoring inspection on 23 February 2012

Evidence

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

Context

A teacher for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has been appointed with effect from the beginning of the summer term 2012. A part-time member of staff is currently absent on grounds of ill health and the position is being covered by a supply teacher. A further part-time member of staff within Key Stage 2 has left the school and her duties are currently being undertaken by the headteacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

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. A legacy of ineffective teaching has resulted in uneven progress as pupils move through the school. An analysis of data presented by the school, a scrutiny of pupils' work and observations based on their responses during lessons indicate that pupils are enjoying their learning and making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. However, the rate at which they progress is better in Key Stage 2 than in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

The quality of teaching

Despite the improvements that have been secured since the previous inspection, there remains some variability in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Lessons in Key Stage 2 are generally much better matched to pupils' learning needs. This is because the quality and use of assessment have improved notably. Care still needs to be taken to ensure that the younger pupils in the class can read and comprehend the texts used during some lessons. Notes on teachers' planning increasingly indicate the extent to which individuals' misconceptions are identified and addressed. The quality of marking has improved significantly and gives due recognition to the effort pupils have made. Comments from the teacher also give a clearer indication as to how pupils may improve and this is now linked to their short-term targets. Teachers display good subject knowledge and, as a result, teachers' planning reflects work that is well organised and structured with clear learning intentions. Pupils respond positively to teaching that actively engages them in their learning

and is stimulating and thought provoking. On the other hand, teaching can, at times, lack variety in pace. On these occasions, some pupils lose concentration and this can inhibit progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are continuing to develop more-positive attitudes to learning. The indoor learning environment is better organised and effectively equipped and relationships between children and staff are developing well. The quality of planning, particularly for indoor activities, has improved since the previous inspection and is much more focused on what children are to learn. However, the use of assessment to identify the gaps in children's knowledge and understanding during lessons and taking effective action to address them remain weak. As a result, some children are still not making sufficient progress. Outdoor provision lacks purpose as it is still not effectively linked to indoor activities and this is restricting children's development.

Progress since the last monitoring 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

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to improve. Low-level disruption in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has declined since the previous inspection. Pupils now work well together and are keen to engage in their learning. This is why pupils are making better progress. Pupils throughout the school are polite and respectful towards each other and any adults they come in contact with.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and the governing body have been resolute in their determination to address high levels of staff absence since the summer of 2011 because they are aware that this is the most significant feature in securing better quality provision. As a result, a new permanent appointment has been made in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 from the beginning of next term. In order to provide continuity and support for improving provision, the headteacher has increased her teaching commitment in Key Stage 2. While it is too early to gauge the impact of these changes, it does reflect positive leadership which has a clear focus on the school improvement agenda. An up-to-date self-evaluation of the school is being produced by the headteacher and, although it is work in progress, it represents a clear step forward since the previous monitoring inspection. The indications are that as school evaluation becomes more robust it will more accurately inform the school improvement plan. A teaching and learning policy is now in place and adhered to by all staff. Although the headteacher monitors the quality of teaching and learning, there is insufficient recorded evidence that can be used to determine strengths and weaknesses or the impact of initiatives designed to secure improvement. The governing body has successfully raised the bar in holding the headteacher to account. Good systems are now in place to monitor the work of the school on a regular basis.

Progress since the last monitoring 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.