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29 June 2012

Mrs C 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 28 June 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 third 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed in any of the key stages.

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's and Young People's Service for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler

Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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 school's 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 third monitoring inspection on 28 June 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chair of the School Improvement Committee, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

A teacher for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 took up her appointment at the beginning of the summer term 2012. The teacher covering the Key Stage 2 class since the previous inspection has now been appointed on a permanent basis.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The end of Year 6 national tests in 2011 showed that attainment in English and mathematics slightly exceeded the national average. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in both subjects was below that attained nationally. Cohorts are very small, so this data should be treated with some caution but an analysis of the school's own data, evidence from lesson observations undertaken during the inspection and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that pupils are making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. The school expects more pupils to attain the higher levels in mathematics and reading than in previous years and the evidence gathered during the monitoring inspection suggests that this is a possibility. The legacy of ineffective teaching is being tackled effectively and, as a result, the rate of progress made by pupils as they move through the school is more even.

The quality of teaching

Since the previous inspection the rate of pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has been a concern. This was as a result of inconsistent and changing staffing. This is no longer the case and there is now less variability in the quality of teaching across the school. In a short space of time very positive relationships have been established with pupils, parents and carers. Under the direction and guidance of the headteacher, expectations of pupils are being raised and there is a much stronger focus on raising achievement. The recently introduced and well organised focused work to help children learn about letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is increasing the younger pupils' confidence in using their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words. As a result pupils' progress in reading and writing is improving. The indoor learning environment is much better organised and the deployment and quality of support by the teaching assistant is more effective because it is much more focused on learning. However, there is

still room for improvement. Planning for literacy and numeracy is overcomplicated and therefore not sufficiently focused on what pupils are to learn during the lesson and, while outdoor provision has improved, it is still not as closely linked to indoor activities as it should be. The headteacher and staff are aware of these issues and plans are in place to address them.

The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 continues to improve. Expectations are higher and every effort is being made to reduce gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The teacher's planning is detailed and care is taken to assess the progress pupils make over time. Lessons are better matched to pupils' learning needs; however, on occasions, the reference to the intended learning within the teacher's planning is not precise enough to allow for pupils' misconceptions to be identified during the lesson.

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 – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The low-level disruption identified at the time of the previous inspection is no longer evident. Pupils are generally well behaved. They are polite and considerate towards their peers, especially those younger than themselves, and are polite when addressing adults. Pupils' attitudes to learning continue to improve and this is one of the reasons why progress is improving. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage / Key Stage 1 class.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The improvements secured in relation to teaching and learning, behaviour and pupils' achievement are because the quality of leadership and management has improved significantly. School self-evaluation is now rigorous and presents a much clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As such, the headteacher is better placed to take action to improve the quality of provision through the school improvement plan. The headteacher is giving effective guidance to staff, particularly within the Early Years Foundation Stage / Key Stage 1 class. She has successfully secured the support of staff in taking the school forward. Both headteacher and staff have worked hard to bring about improvement since the previous inspection and for that they are to be commended. Governance is continuing to improve at a pace and governors' contribution to improving the quality of education is significant. This is because they are determined to support the headteacher on improving teaching and learning. There is now a good balance between support and holding the headteacher to account which is effectively keeping at bay any sign of complacency.

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

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

External support

The quality and support by the local authority are good. The school effectiveness team provides effective support and challenge.