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13 July 2012

Ms Pauline Roberts and Mr Rob Shadbolt
Acting Headteachers
Cumnor C of E Primary School
Oxford Road
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Oxford
OX2 9PQ

Dear Ms Roberts and Mr Shadbolt

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cumnor C of E Primary School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Cooper, Additional inspector, to your school on 11–12 July 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2012. 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.

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 Oxford and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012

- Improve teaching and eradicate any that is inadequate by ensuring that:
 - pupils are made fully aware of what they need to learn
 - work provides appropriate challenge, particularly for middle ability and more-able pupils
 - pupils are involved more in assessing for themselves how well they are doing so they can take on more responsibility for their own learning.
- Raise pupils' achievement by:
 - telling pupils clearly how to improve their work
 - improving the curriculum at Key Stage 1, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management and rebuild the school's capacity for sustained improvement by:
 - ensuring that all staff work together to achieve a shared vision for the school's success that is supported by all members of the community
 - holding staff to account for the learning and progress in their classes and areas of responsibility
 - ensuring the governing body holds senior leaders fully accountable for the school's performance
 - strengthening the school's improvement plan so that it provides a clear focus for action to drive up standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Special measures: monitoring of Cumnor C of E Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 11–12 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' books and met with the acting headteachers, staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Following the departure of the headteacher, after the last inspection, there was an interim arrangement for the continuing leadership and management of the school, including the stepping up of staff into management positions and the involvement of a local headteacher. The governing body and the local authority then appointed two interim acting headteachers from April. This meant that there was a delay in making substantial inroads into overcoming the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

A consultation is underway regarding the school becoming an academy. The school is in the process of appointing a new headteacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievements are improving in both Key Stages 1 and 2. The indications from the unvalidated results of the recent national tests show that almost all pupils in Year 6 made the nationally expected progress in English and mathematics. The school's own improved monitoring of pupils' achievements shows they have made more rapid gains during recent months. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to make good progress. The good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been maintained since the last inspection.

Pupils' progress is not consistent enough and reflects the variation in the quality of teaching over time across the school. Pupils do not always make the progress they should in their lessons. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that they do not all routinely complete enough work and improve it systematically, especially in Key Stage 1. There are weaknesses in pupils' accuracy of spelling and in the presentation of their work.

The school is successful in supporting those pupils who are most at risk of falling behind. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress and gain confidence in their learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement.

- Raise pupils' achievement – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving and continues to be good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching is more effective in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 where, despite improvements, some remains inadequate. Some good and outstanding teaching was observed in Key Stage 2.

In nearly all lessons, teachers make clear what the lesson is about. There is usually a prominent statement identifying the key learning expected. In the best lessons, this is then adapted to match the abilities and needs of the pupils. In the good and outstanding lessons, no time is wasted, the management of pupils' tasks is handled expertly to maximise the time available for pupils to complete their work and they achieve well. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities to allow higher attaining pupils the chance to move more quickly to independent tasks in order to provide them with a greater challenge.

Where there are weaknesses in teaching:

- lessons lack clarity and accuracy in what is being taught
- the balance and management of activities do not promote the best possible opportunities for learning
- pupils do not complete enough good quality work in lessons and over time.

Teachers' marking is improving and ongoing assessment of pupils' progress now has greater priority. Pupils find teachers' comments helpful but not enough attention is given to checking that errors identified in marking are diligently followed up to ensure that they do not reoccur. The relationship between learning objectives, the quality of pupils' work, teachers' marking and future targets is not firmly established.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas of improvement.

- Improve teaching and eradicate any that is inadequate – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in and around school is generally good. They play well together at break times and are supportive of each other in class while working on their tasks. When they are fully engaged with appropriate, interesting and challenging tasks, they show excellent attitudes to their work. However, they can quickly lose interest when they have to listen for too long or tasks are unclear and less engaging. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour but do not always wait for pupils to give their full attention while providing explanations and giving instructions. Pupils commented to inspectors that behaviour was better when learning was interesting.

Pupils attend well. Those who spoke to inspectors raised no concerns about their safety in school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The delayed appointment of the two acting headteachers meant that it was only during the summer term when improvements were driven forward strongly. They have shown excellent leadership since they started. A small group of parents and carers, drawn from all year groups, told inspectors that the school now has a new 'dynamic and enthusiasm'.

Staff were positive about their individual roles and felt valued. There is a shared commitment to make the necessary improvements. Leadership roles are much better defined and there is clearer accountability at all levels. Staff feel empowered to develop their roles and have a better understanding of what is expected of them. They believe that their views are being listened to.

A good start has been made on developing a more rigorous system to assess and monitor pupils' progress. Senior leaders are establishing a better understanding of the different groups of pupils and how well they are doing. All teachers now have access to the analysis of pupils' assessment data. Parents and carers indicated that they would like more information about their children's progress. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school, but a systematic process to monitor the quality of lessons is in its early stages as leaders develop their own skills in this aspect of their work.

Leaders of English and mathematics have reviewed the content of the curriculum and have clarified what is expected of pupils as they move through school. They have produced useful documents to aid teachers' planning. The school's improvement plan is an appropriate document to move the school forward and monitor progress.

The governing body has worked closely and successfully with the local authority to manage staff changes in the school. An audit of its work was undertaken and this has raised areas that require improvement. Governors are undertaking training to address these matters. They are increasingly aware of their role in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.

All pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, have the opportunity to take part in the full range of activities provided.

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management and rebuild the school's capacity for sustained improvement – good

External support

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The authority has provided good overall support in managing staff changes, appointing acting headteachers and aiding the development of the management capacity of the school. Other support has helped to improve teaching.