

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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25 October 2012

Miss Caroline Owen
Headteacher
St Laurence CofE VA Primary School
Collingwood Road
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Nottinghamshire
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Dear Miss Owen

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Laurence CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23–24 October 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 February 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Under the guidance of the headteacher, develop the capacity of the leaders and managers to ensure that effective steps are taken to remedy weaknesses that affect pupils' achievement and increase consistency across the school by:
 - raising attainment in English and mathematics in all classes
 - securing better teaching in all areas and accelerating progress in reading and mathematics
 - establishing a curriculum that allows pupils to progress consistently well in all classes
 - applying rigorous systems for monitoring all aspects of the school's work, including the consistent implementation of the policy for the effective marking of pupils' work.
- Ensure that, by September 2012, staff use robust assessment information to set challenging targets for all pupils, which are explained to pupils and shared with all staff, parents and carers.
- Immediately devise appropriate policies for the effective management of behaviour and for pupils' punctual arrival at school, ensuring procedures are understood by pupils, parents and carers and all staff, and are consistently applied.

Special measures: monitoring of St Laurence CofE VA Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 23–24 October 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, looked carefully at school documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority. The inspector visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, and checked a sample of pupils' work.

Context

There have been no significant contextual changes since the previous inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress continues to improve but it is still not good enough to raise attainment rapidly. The unvalidated results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 in the summer term this year indicate that attainment is broadly average in both English and mathematics. However, very few pupils exceed the levels expected for their age throughout the school. Expectations about how much and at what level pupils should be achieving are often too low. Consequently, too many pupils are not given sufficiently demanding work to make the good progress of which they are capable. Boys do not perform as well as girls, and pupils who have special educational needs make slower progress than other groups of pupils.

Raising attainment is hampered by the fact that many pupils have gaps in their skills and knowledge due to previous inadequate provision. The school is rapidly addressing these needs through intensive help and guidance, including additional support from teaching assistants, and providing learning experiences which are more closely matched to pupils' needs. For example, the school is successfully improving pupils' achievement in reading through the reading recovery programme. As a result, in Year 2, attainment in reading is above the national average at the higher National Curriculum Level 3.

Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains good. Children enjoy an exciting range of activities and resources, enhanced by the new purpose-built outdoor area, where they are encouraged to explore, experiment and interact with each other. Good arrangements this year have provided teachers with detailed knowledge about the levels individual pupils moving into Year 1 are working at, to ensure good continuity between year groups.

The quality of teaching

All staff, including teaching assistants, have had a wide range of training to improve their skills. However, this has not resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The school recognises that there is more to do to ensure that all teachers make use of precise teaching methods to support and guide pupils so they make good progress. Where teaching is less than good, teachers' planning provides details of pupils' activities and teachers' actions but fails to state clearly what the different groups of pupils are going to learn in the lesson. As a result, the work set for more-able pupils is not hard enough and the less-able pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are not guided through small learning steps. Where teaching is good or better, pupils are actively involved in focused and purposeful learning and work is precisely matched to their ability levels. Although there are signs of improvement, teaching is not consistently strong enough to ensure that in all classes, pupils are making good progress.

A revised marking policy is ensuring that pupils are provided with improved and more detailed academic guidance. There is some good practice where teachers provide pupils with helpful comments so that they can check and correct their work, and understand what they need to do to improve it and meet their targets. However, this is not consistent across all classes. Pupils now have more chances to respond to marking and learn from their mistakes, but few opportunities as yet to evaluate their own and other pupils' work. Most pupils know and understand their targets because they are explained to them in child-friendly language. Pupils report that their target key rings help them to share their learning targets at home with parents and carers.

The school is changing its approach to the way basic skills are taught. The 'topic' approach is aimed at improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of key concepts across a wide range of subjects. Pupils talk enthusiastically about enjoying a wider range of interesting learning experiences.

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

- ensure that by September 2012, staff use robust assessment information to set challenging targets for all pupils, which are explained to pupils and shared with all staff, parents and carers – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and welcoming. The school is successfully nurturing an atmosphere of care and respect for all, which is now reflected in the positive relationships between pupils and adults. The impact of nurture groups and positive play is evident in the pupils' calm and orderly conduct around the school and in the playground. Pupils are becoming more enthusiastic learners whose behaviour is consistently good, both in and out of lessons. Pupils continue to say that they feel safe in school and enjoy good friendships, with no fear of intimidating behaviour.

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

- immediately devise appropriate policies for the effective management of behaviour and for pupils' punctual arrival at school, ensuring procedures are understood by pupils, parents, carers and all staff, and are consistently applied – good.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The headteacher is providing strong leadership and is bringing a clearer sense of direction and educational purpose to the school's work. Teachers' assessments are becoming more accurate, allowing leaders to track the progress made by different groups more effectively. Thorough monitoring by the headteacher and local authority is identifying precisely the aspects of teaching and learning that individual teachers need to improve, and this is being followed up with personalised coaching. A few staff are responding well to this and improving their practice. However, the pace of change is not rapid enough to tackle some longstanding and deep-rooted practice that is less than good. The training for support staff has had a positive impact on the quality of their work, particularly in the way they provide individual help and guidance and daily sessions on phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Middle leaders are developing their skills and are regularly involved in a range of monitoring activities. However, their monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work is not thorough enough to make a marked contribution to improving achievement. The local authority is aware that further support is needed at both senior and middle leadership levels to increase the pace of change and to successfully address the weaknesses in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching and learning.

Governors say that the quality and clarity of the information they receive are good, so they clearly understand the issues facing the school and the progress being made towards the challenging targets set. Meetings of the governing body now focus much more on pupils' achievement data provided by the school. They continue to ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding and child protection, are met well.

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

- under the guidance of the headteacher, develop the capacity of the leaders and managers to ensure that effective steps are taken to remedy weaknesses that affect pupils' achievement and increase consistency across the school – satisfactory.

External support

The school is continuing to receive good support from the local authority, predominantly through the challenge and guidance of both the school improvement adviser and senior school improvement adviser. Monitoring of the school's performance by the local authority is thorough and accurate. Regular reports from

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the school improvement adviser provide the governing body and the school's leaders with helpful pointers for improvement.