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15 November 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 to your school on 13–14 November 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, 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 the last monitoring inspection – good.

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 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 hold 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 second monitoring inspection on 13–14 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' books and met with the acting headteachers, staff, members of the governing body, a small group of parents, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. The Early Years Foundation Stage was not a focus on this visit.

Context

The two acting headteachers have continued to lead the school through the Autumn Term. A new headteacher will take up post in January 2013. There have been a number of staffing issues which have affected the continuity of teaching in some classes and have also hampered the progress of some aspects of school improvement. Governors have completed their consultation with parents and have decided to apply for academy status.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2012 unvalidated national test results show that pupils in Year 6 did well. All pupils reached the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5. High-ability pupils are being supported this year to help them reach Level 6. Pupils in Year 2 also did well in the tests, with an above-average proportion reaching the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics.

The school's own detailed checks on pupils' progress show that it is improving. Inspection observations of pupils' at work in lessons and scrutiny of their books demonstrate that progress is not yet consistently good in all classes. This is because, although improving, the quality of teaching across all classes is not yet as good as the best teaching in the school. Better teaching is ensuring that more pupils are completing an appropriate amount of work at the right level.

Pupils are writing for a wide range of purposes and successfully developing their ideas and use of language. Pupils' vocabulary develops well because teachers give good attention to this in lessons. Pupils are successfully encouraged to develop their ideas through answering questions in all lessons and in their writing activities.

Pupils who need additional help receive well-managed support and make at least expected and often better-than-expected progress. The school is successfully using pupil premium money, additional government funding for pupils in local authority

care and those known to be eligible free school meals, by carefully matching additional help to meet the needs of individual pupils.

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

Raise pupils' achievement – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve but remains stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. There is now a greater consistency across the school in methods used to ensure that lessons are effective. Lessons start promptly and pupils are consistently encouraged to get themselves ready to learn so that no time is lost.

The good and sometimes outstanding teaching observed at the last inspection has been maintained. In most lessons teachers are providing a variety of tasks for pupils of all abilities, especially for those who are more able. In the best lessons these pupils are moving to more difficult work at an early stage in lessons. This practice is also helping to raise the expectations of the class as a whole because sometimes other pupils find they are also able to move to the more difficult work.

All teachers now explain to pupils what lessons are about. Where teachers do this best they also go on to explain clearly the things the pupils are likely to, or could, learn. This helps pupils to check for themselves how well they are doing. This is happening in most lessons. The consistency of marking continues to improve. More teachers are regularly writing comments that give guidance on what pupils could do to improve. Where it works best pupils have the chance to act on the comments made by the teacher. In all classes pupils are encouraged to answer questions and give explanations. This not only successfully improves pupils' confidence and speaking and listening skills but also helps them to clarify their thinking and develop opinions.

Despite more consistency in the teaching methods used across the school, there are still some weaknesses in Key Stage 1. This happens when not enough attention is given to making sure that time in lessons is used well. For example, younger pupils sometimes spend too long sitting and listening and not enough time 'doing' and getting to the heart of the learning. Group and individual activities are not always managed well enough to ensure pupils have the very best chance to learn well.

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

Improve teaching and eradicate any that is inadequate – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and only begin to lose interest in lessons when they have to sit for too long in whole-class discussions without contributing and when teachers do not manage pupils' independent and group activities well enough to ensure that they stay focused.

Pupils have improved their readiness to learn at the start of lessons. The school has been working on this. Apart from a small amount of boisterous play on the playground, pupils behave well around the school and show respect for each other, staff and visitors.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The acting headteachers have continued to drive forward improvements in the school. They work well together as a team and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The progress of some planned improvements has been hampered because of staffing issues, but good progress has been made on further developing the roles and expertise of key leaders in school. The shared commitment to improve remains strong.

Middle leaders and teachers have worked closely with local authority consultants in the areas of supporting pupils with special educational needs, teaching mathematics and English and developing the skills needed to observe lessons and make judgements about the quality of teaching. These activities have helped the middle leaders validate and judge the quality of the school's work with increasing accuracy. Middle leaders are more confident in their work and are now beginning to make a difference.

Subject plans, developing at the time of the last monitoring visit, are now in place. It is now clear what pupils should be learning in each class. Other developments to increase the amount of writing and spelling practice and improve knowledge of letter sounds and their combinations are helping to raise skills.

A clear procedure is now in place to manage and check teachers' performance against targets that have a direct link to pupils' progress and school improvement. It is not now automatic that teachers move to higher levels of pay.

Members of the governing body have reviewed how effective it is and carried out an audit of its skills. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has re-organised the way it goes about its business and developed a systematic way of checking how well the school is doing. Governors are not afraid of asking challenging questions of school leaders.

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

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

External support

The authority has provided good support. In particular, it has helped middle leaders develop their skills and successfully supported the governing body in its work.

Areas for future improvement:

Rapidly tackle and overcome any remaining weaknesses in teaching in Key Stage 1.