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12 December 2012

Mrs Penny Vernon
Acting Headteacher
Kirkby Fleetham Church of England Primary School
Forge Lane
Kirkby Fleetham
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 0SA

Dear Mrs Vernon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kirkby Fleetham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you and your colleague made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better and hence accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment particularly in writing and mathematics by:
 - eliminating all inadequate teaching
 - improving teachers' knowledge of National Curriculum levels to enable them to accurately assess pupils' attainment and progress and to provide them with the work they need to reach the next level
 - teachers using accurate assessment information to plan activities which sufficiently challenge each pupil to take their next step in learning
 - developing teachers' questioning skills to provide a clear understanding of how well pupils are doing
 - maintaining a good pace of learning in all lessons
 - increasing the opportunities provided for pupils to write at length and to apply their knowledge to solve problems and carry out independent investigations
 - improving the effectiveness in the marking of pupils' work to aid accurate assessment of their ability and to provide additional guidance for improvement
 - teachers planning tasks which are relevant to pupils' experiences and which inspire and motivate them to learn.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in order to make the necessary improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of provision by:
 - developing the skills of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, in effective monitoring and evaluation
 - carrying out rigorous systematic checks on the quality of teaching which take full account of how well pupils are learning
 - providing all staff with detailed feedback on how to improve their performance
 - regularly tracking and analysing the progress made by all classes and groups of pupils within each subject
 - introducing a clear system for the identification of those pupils with special educational needs
 - using the analyses of systematic monitoring and evaluation to highlight key priorities in development plans which include measurable targets linked to improved outcomes for pupils
 - making middle leaders more accountable for provision in the subjects which they manage.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 December 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including observing teaching in each class jointly with the acting headteachers. The inspector scrutinised documents including information on pupils' progress, pupils' work, teachers' planning, the school's evaluation of its work, minutes of governing body meetings, information on how the school keeps pupils safe and local authority reviews of the school's work. The inspector met with the two acting headteachers, members of the governing body, subject leaders, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority.

Context

After the inspection in June 2012, a consultant headteacher was appointed on a part-time basis to cover the absence of the substantive headteacher. The consultant headteacher was not available from 5 November 2012 onwards, so two acting headteachers were appointed on a part-time basis to lead the school, who are both experienced headteachers of similar-sized rural schools in the area. There are now partnership arrangements in place with one of these schools to enable the sharing of good practice.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In 2012, the unvalidated Key Stage 2 national test results showed an improvement in pupils' reading and mathematics at the expected Level 4 and at the higher Level 5. All pupils made expected progress in mathematics and most made the rate of progress expected in reading. The Year 2 national assessments for 2012 showed a decline in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics compared with the previous year, but there was an increase in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics. The rates of progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are increasing as their needs are being met more closely and they are receiving better quality support.

The school's tracking data show that almost all pupils are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders have identified that boys are not achieving as well as girls in reading. They are tackling this by ensuring a stronger focus on developing pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics). However, pupils, particularly boys, would benefit from a wider choice of books being made available to them, including books which appeal to their individual interests. There are now more opportunities for pupils to write at length and work in pupils' books shows noticeable improvement in the quality and content of their writing. This was also seen in displays of pupils' writing about the recent floods in the local area because they were able to write powerful accounts of their

experiences. There are more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects, such as in their work in religious education or recording their activities when involved in the 'Forest School' programme. However, pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work need further improvement.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving and this is reflected in better standards of work for pupils. Teachers are refining their skills in ensuring that the work they give to pupils is at the right level. They have benefited from sharing good practice with the partner school and are now beginning to assess pupils' work more accurately. Teachers are asking more effective questions, which are promoting pupils' thinking skills and pupils are able to give thoughtful responses. Teachers use appropriate subject specific vocabulary and this encourages pupils to use and understand it. Pupils say they are enjoying their learning more and they are motivated and interested in completing their work as lessons are conducted at a faster pace. Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that there are more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in solving problems and to carry out independent investigations. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used more effectively as shown in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class where pupils were able to follow the journey of a balloon as it travelled from their village to a castle in Germany, through observing different landscapes on the interactive whiteboard. This did much to enhance their learning and they were able to make some interesting and thoughtful comments on what they could see. Leaders have identified that there is a need to promote the use of ICT further, particularly to engage boys more in their learning. Teaching assistants are deployed more effectively and are receiving support and training as well as working with a teaching assistant from the partner school to enhance their skills.

While the marking of pupils' work is done conscientiously and has improved, there is still room for further refinement in identifying appropriate 'next steps' in learning. Pupils know their learning targets and understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers share with pupils what they are to learn in each lesson and the steps they need to take to achieve the lesson objective. Pupils say this is helpful to them and they are able to assess for themselves how well they have done or check the work of their classmates and identify how their work could be improved. There are better opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to choose their own activities indoors, but the provision outdoors requires further development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that behaviour has improved in lessons, although they did express concern that pupils were occasionally unkind to each other when playing outdoors. However, they stated that any incidents were quickly resolved by teachers. In lessons there is a calm and purposeful working atmosphere and pupils cooperate

with one another when working in groups or pairs. Pupils are keen to learn and listen carefully to their teachers.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The quality of leadership and management has improved since June 2012 and this is why pupils are making better progress than they were at that time. The consultant headteacher was able to address some urgent priorities promptly, including ensuring teachers were deployed according to their strengths and improving classrooms to ensure more effective learning. The two acting headteachers are now focusing their attention on improving the quality of teaching and raising expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are rigorously checking on the quality of teaching and giving effective advice to teachers on how they can improve their practice. This advice is well received and promptly acted upon by staff. Subject leaders are beginning to develop their skills in checking on pupils' progress and work in the subjects for which they are responsible. They are now able to identify areas of underachievement and target suitable activities and support for those children who need it. Leaders work more closely together as a team and now have a better overview of pupils' standards of work across the school. One leader is developing skills in introducing a better system for the identification of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and this is ensuring that support is targeted more effectively to meet these pupils' needs. The acting headteachers are tackling any weaknesses systematically and have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve.

Governance is improving because governors are now presented with more detailed information on the work of the school and, as a result, are better able to hold the school to account and challenge the work of leaders. Governors have been identified to focus on specific subjects or aspects of the school's work in order to check on any developments, but this work is still at an early stage. While the school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities linked to the key issues from the last inspection, there are not always measurable targets by which the progress made in these areas can be evaluated. Leaders and managers, including governors, are now involving parents and carers more in the work of the school, through holding meetings to seek their views and providing workshops so that they can support their child's learning.

External support

The school has received effective support from the local authority. In addition to providing leadership support from the consultant and acting headteachers, it has developed a partnership arrangement with a school led by one of the acting headteachers. The relationship with the partner school is contributing towards improving the quality of teaching and leadership and management. Local authority officers now attend meetings of the governing body and this is helping to improve governance. Support has been provided from a local authority consultant and the

special educational needs coordinator in the partner school and this is helping to improve the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The local authority statement of action was judged fit for purpose.