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22 March 2013

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 21 March 2013, 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 made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second 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 second monitoring inspection on 21 March 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including two joint lesson observations with the acting headteachers and a learning walk. She scrutinised documents including pupil progress information, pupils' work, senior leaders' evaluations of the school's work, the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and information from a local authority review. The inspector met with a group of pupils, the two acting headteachers, subject leaders, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection visit on 11 December 2012, one governor has resigned, three governors have been appointed, including two associate governors, and there is currently a vacancy for a foundation governor. The substantive headteacher has resigned and two acting headteachers will remain in post until substantive leadership is appointed. During this monitoring inspection visit, most of the Key Stage 2 pupils and one teacher were out of school for most of the day at a choir tournament.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's data show that most pupils are now making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are small groups where progress is not quite as rapid, including more-able pupils in Year 2 and a few pupils in Years 3 and 5 in reading and writing. Leaders have identified this through their own evaluations of pupils' progress and have taken steps to address this, including providing particular support for these pupils and targeted work to help them improve further. The school's data show that some individual pupils are making very rapid gains and most pupils are now on track to reach or exceed the expectations for their age. Leaders have revised the school targets for pupils' achievement and these are now even more aspirational.

Teachers have been working closely with staff from a partner school to check that assessments are more accurate. They are using this information more effectively to provide work at the right level for pupils' abilities and this is enabling pupils to make more progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are also making better progress because their specific needs are now being more accurately identified and addressed. Work in pupils' books shows that over time, they are making more progress than before. However, partly because of a legacy of underachievement, pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) and their spelling are not as good as they should be. Handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work are beginning to improve and pupils are now developing

a cursive style of handwriting. Leaders have purchased a series of reading books which appeal to the individual interests of the boys and focus on developing phonic knowledge. This has encouraged boys to read more and they are now making better progress. The gap is narrowing in relation to the girls.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving. Assessment information is being used more effectively by teachers to inform their planning. In English and mathematics lessons seen and in pupils' work, it is evident that teachers routinely incorporate tasks which are pitched at different levels to match pupils' abilities. Teachers are now using questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding. Questions are more probing and pupils are expected to give reasons for their answers. On occasions, however, pupils do not think carefully enough about their responses and do not always give the most logical answers, for example, by stating that 'burgers' are likely to be found in the 'church'. Pupils say that there is a learning objective for each lesson and that 'steps to success' are identified, which they say are helpful in enabling them to achieve and assess for themselves how well they have learned. However, they are less sure of how to demonstrate that they have achieved their personal learning targets. Pupils use a range of resources to help them which are available on 'working walls' and, for example, lists of words which they have contributed to in order to extend their vocabulary. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now used more effectively by pupils so that they can demonstrate what they have learned and understood. Marking and feedback are improving, particularly in Key Stage 2. Pupils say that they now understand what they have to do to improve their work and have opportunities in the next lesson to address any misconceptions. There are more frequent opportunities for pupils to work together in groups and pairs and they enjoy 'challenges' such as completing a mathematical problem while the register is being taken. Pupils say there are more opportunities for them to work independently and, therefore, they feel they are learning more.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' say that behaviour is improving, but that there are a few occasions when some pupils are slightly less engaged in their learning, particularly if they have to listen to the teacher for too long. They were also able to identify particular times when pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes was not quite as good as it should be. A few concerns were also expressed about pupils' behaviour by parents and carers in the school's questionnaire and, therefore, leaders are taking steps to address these concerns. Pupils say they feel safe and know they can approach any member of staff if they have a worry or concern. Pupils have more positive attitudes to learning and parent governors report that pupils are now keener to come to school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The acting headteachers are tackling the weaknesses in the school with rigour. They regularly check on the quality of teaching and pupils' work and provide teachers with valuable feedback that identifies exactly where practice can improve. This was demonstrated when they gave feedback to teachers following joint lesson observations and in their records of monitoring the quality of teaching. These records show that any targets identified for improvement are followed up. Leaders are providing more opportunities for staff training. Staff are able to visit other schools and this is enabling them to reflect on their practice and learn from others.

Subject leaders are developing their confidence in checking and evaluating the work in the subjects or areas for which they are responsible. They have benefited from training and help from leaders in the partner school and from local authority consultants. They have produced their own action plans, have taken more responsibility for improvements and are now beginning to demonstrate the impact of their actions on improved outcomes for pupils. The leaders are now working closely together as a team and learning from one another.

Governors are determined that the school should improve and are taking positive steps to secure the strategic direction of the school. They have restructured the committees and are using the expertise and strengths of governors to the best effect. They are tackling the most important priorities in a careful and measured way, particularly in ensuring stability in the leadership of the school. They have taken advantage of opportunities for governor training and are developing their skills in checking and evaluating the work of the school. They now receive more detailed information from the acting headteachers and are better able to challenge the work of the school. However, although a few visits have taken place, governors are just beginning to gather first-hand evidence of the work of the school.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support. Governors have appreciated the support from the local authority with the induction of new governors and in helping governors to improve their role in checking and evaluating the work of the school. The school has received support from an Education Development Adviser and special educational needs and ICT consultants. The local authority has conducted a review of the progress of the school since the last inspection visit and brokered support from a local partner school. The local authority is reducing the amount of support provided but is ensuring it is available, should any further assistance be required.