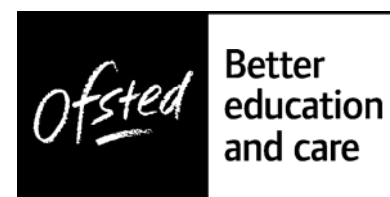


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Mr W Grace  
The Headteacher  
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Voluntary Controlled Community School  
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15 February 2006

Dear Mr Grace

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NORTON  
FITZWARREN CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

**Introduction**

Following my visit with Mo Roberts HMI to your school on 9 and 10 February 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

**Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils, a representative from the local authority and a senior lecturer from the University of Plymouth working with the school on developing assessment.

**Context**

To support school improvement some learning support assistants (LSAs) are working additional hours. There have been no other changes to staffing since the last monitoring visit.

## **Achievement and standards**

From the school's evidence and findings of the inspectors, standards are satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 in English and mathematics. They are improving significantly in science due to regular and consistent teaching of the subject. The higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are being given additional, well targeted support in science to help them achieve the standards expected of them. Pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Achievement and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and most children reach the levels expected of them. In Key Stage 1, test results in 2005 were better than previous years but below national expectations. In 2005, test results also show that, by the age of eleven, pupils' achievement was significantly below what is expected nationally. However, in lessons observed and monitoring records scrutinised, pupils make at least satisfactory progress and many in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making good progress. The current Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory progress towards the challenging targets they are expected to reach in English, mathematics and science by the end of the year.

Thorough monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning has meant significant improvements in standards and achievement. The school has set clear targets for attainment in English and mathematics for each class, for groups of pupils of similar ability, and for individuals. These have made a notable impact as staff and pupils now have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve. The consistent use of targets and assessments is also helping the higher attaining pupils to understand why staff have much greater expectations of them. Very effective use is made of additional support programmes led by skilful LSAs working with small groups of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties respond well to the focused support they receive and make good progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2004:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science—satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

This is not an area for improvement and was not monitored on this visit.

## **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and in over half of lessons it is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Inspectors focused on planning for English, mathematics and science and this is good. There is a consistent structure which includes clear objectives for pupils' learning matched to their attainment and age. Teachers know what pupils should be covering and most have good expectations of what pupils should be achieving. LSAs are deployed very effectively to support pupils with learning

difficulties. In good lessons pupils are given work that is challenging and helps them to do their best. Pupils find these sessions enjoyable and are proud of their achievements. They behave very well in lessons and maintain their concentration. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and provide tasks which make pupils think and work hard. Pupils do particularly well in lessons where the pace of learning is fast and in which they are expected to play an active part. Teachers are developing effective strategies for extending the higher attaining pupils, including well focused, demanding activities which provide interesting intellectual challenges.

Targets are carefully matched to pupils' abilities and pupils know what they have to do to meet them. These targets are being used more consistently in Key Stages 1 and 2 to help all pupils to know how they can make the best progress possible. In the Foundation Stage teaching is satisfactory and children work steadily towards the levels expected of them by the end of the Reception year. Staff are carefully reviewing how they measure pupils' progress and ways of involving them in assessing their own learning. Most teachers make good use of questioning to assess pupils' learning and are developing skills in targeting additional questions to provide extra challenge.

Classes are well resourced and equipment is used skilfully. For example, teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively and with confidence to involve and motivate pupils.

Curriculum provision is satisfactory. Considerable progress has been made in developing a new curriculum framework. It sets out effectively the skills and topics to be taught to each year group in Key Stages 1 and 2 and clearly outlines the rotation of topics in order to avoid duplication in the mixed age classes. Gaps relating to personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and music are being addressed currently. The Foundation Stage curriculum has not yet been fully incorporated into the whole school framework. As a consequence subject leaders are not always clear how the basic skills and attitudes to their subjects are established when children start school. This limits their ability to monitor effectively pupils' early progress and aptitudes. The religious education (RE) curriculum is supported and enriched by regular whole school assemblies led by the local clergy. The school provides sufficient time for RE to be taught throughout the school. There are a number of interesting after school activities, visits and visitors which enhance pupils' experiences.

The school continues to provide a good standard of care and support for pupils. The staff are reviewing the type of guidance pupils need to improve their learning. Pupils know what they need to learn next but some are less certain how these targets will help them reach the standards expected at the end of the year. In lessons teachers give clear and encouraging feedback that helps pupils extend their learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2004:

- improve the teaching, including assessment, and hence pupils' learning—good progress
- ensure that sufficient religious education is taught so that standards rise—satisfactory progress.

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some notable strengths. The leadership team has determined its priorities accurately and successfully increased the pace of improvement. Through a new programme of focus weeks, subject leaders are developing skills in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subject and providing staff with guidance on how these can be improved. As a consequence, lessons are more focused on raising standards and helping pupils to make greater progress. The headteacher has played a significant role in leading and managing these developments. He has provided good guidance, support and practical help including joint monitoring of lessons and teaching groups of pupils to boost their progress. Whilst subject leaders are successfully influencing positive developments their level of understanding of what children should know and understand in the Foundation Stage is underdeveloped.

Monitoring reports from the leadership team and local authority officers record effectively the progress the school is making on the key issues for improvement in the last inspection report. Financial planning continues to be closely aligned to school improvement. An example of this is the extension of hours for some LSAs in order to support improved standards and progress.

The governing body is becoming more involved although it still does not have its full number. Governors are developing a satisfactory understanding of the school's data and what it tells them about standards and progress. The headteacher is working effectively to support this aspect of their role. Since the last monitoring visit the headteacher has done very well in leading his team towards making the improvements necessary. He has been particularly successful with regard to developing curriculum planning and establishing clear structures to support consistent teaching and learning. The school benefits from having a headteacher who has the time to monitor teaching, work with groups needing additional support, and to focus on moving the school forward. Given the pace of improvement since the last monitoring visit, the school demonstrates good capacity to improve.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2004:

- improve the effectiveness of the governing body—satisfactory progress
- improve school development planning, linking this to financial planning—satisfactory progress.

## **External support**

The school has benefited significantly from the very good support provided by local authority advisers, consultants, leading teachers and advanced skills teachers. They have provided the necessary advice and guidance for subject leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning and have enhanced their professional development. The core support group continues to monitor the school's progress efficiently. The good support of the University of Plymouth in developing assessment is beginning to improve the ability of staff in methods for measuring the progress that pupils make.

## **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures—good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection—good.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Integrate fully the Foundation Stage curriculum into the school's curriculum framework
- Ensure subject leaders gain an understanding of the relationship between their subject and the areas of learning taught in the Foundation Stage.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Somerset, and the Diocesan Director of Education for Bath and Wells.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wheeler  
H M Inspector of Schools