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Mrs J Sparling
The Headteacher
Fairford Church of England Primary School
The Park
Leafield Road
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Gloucestershire GL7 4JQ

Dear Mrs Sparling

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF FAIRFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Abdul-Hayee Murshad and Anne Johns, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 5 and 6 December 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2006.

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, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority (LA), and key members of staff.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, a new chair of governors has been appointed and the committees have been restructured. Two members of staff left in July 2006 and have been replaced. A further member of staff will leave at the end of the autumn term and will be replaced. The post of head of Key Stage 1, Foundation Stage and curriculum was not filled when interviews were held in October. This post will be re-advertised. As a consequence, the senior leadership team has operated with extra shared responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is now satisfactory, although there are inconsistencies in the rate of progress that pupils make. Attainment on entry is slightly above average and children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Progress is uneven in Years 1 and 2 although satisfactory overall. Achievement is less good in Years 3 and 4 although pupils' progress is being tracked carefully and extra support in some lessons has had a positive impact recently on pupils' learning. Pupils' progress is good in Year 5 and satisfactory in Year 6. Standards overall are satisfactory. The school has begun to address underachievement in both writing and mathematics but pupils' progress in these areas is still too low across the school. The school's use of a new tracking system is helping it to set targets for each year group based on pupils' prior attainment to ensure that pupils make better progress. With the help of the LA, the school has implemented an Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) which is beginning to raise the number of pupils who meet their age related expectations in English and mathematics.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- make sure that all pupils achieve as well as they can in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils say they enjoy school very much and feel that new ways of doing things introduced over the past few months are helping them to work better. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Appropriate expectations are sensitively and consistently reinforced by staff, which helps develop pupils' self confidence and self esteem. Pupils are kind to each other and show courtesy and respect to adults. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains good. Assemblies provide regular opportunities for celebration and to enhance the spiritual development of pupils. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own actions and the impact they have on others. The school council has been influential in improving playtimes and enables pupils' views to be shared. There have been no fixed term exclusions. The school continues to work effectively to maintain attendance which is close to the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. Teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Planning has improved and is better focused on learning. In most lessons observed the work set was well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Occasionally, the needs of more able pupils are still not met effectively. Teachers usually describe the

learning aims clearly and reinforce this by reminding pupils about the objectives during the lesson. In lessons where the pace is lively, pupils are motivated to learn well and are keen and enthusiastic. In a few lessons teachers still over direct pupils. Pupils valued the opportunities to evaluate their own learning, but this was not evident in every class.

The role and impact of teaching assistants (TAs) in supporting learning are developing well. Teachers have incorporated the new marking guidance into their practice and most provide regular informative comments to support pupils' learning. Pupils say that these comments are helpful. Pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if they have a concern.

Staff are using the improved assessment and tracking systems more effectively to set individual targets to benefit the pupils. They are developing the use of the information gleaned from these systems, for example, by grouping pupils or allocating extra support. Regular monitoring by the headteacher, external consultants, and senior staff has led to better intervention to support and improve teaching. The implementation of monitoring and tracking procedures is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- raise teachers' expectations for the higher attaining pupils – satisfactory
- implement rigorous procedures to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and track pupils' learning – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

School leadership and management have improved since the previous visit. With good external support, a number of key weaknesses are being addressed with growing confidence. However, the legacy of delayed action following the previous inspection in February 2006 means that new strategies are only recently having a positive impact. The leadership team in the school is not fully in place and this has hindered the pace at which the school has been able to catch up on lost time. Nevertheless, school leaders are benefiting from LA support and the headteacher is beginning to lead improvements more assertively and with more rigour. This determination to improve is demonstrated in better systems for checking on the school's effectiveness and planning. There has now been a systematic review and analysis of pupils' books so that marking has improved. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning have begun to improve the pace and structure of lessons so that pupils are more productively engaged and make more secure progress in their learning. Teachers have continued to work hard to embrace and understand better the mechanisms by which pupils' age related targets are met and how progress is tracked more effectively.

The governing body has responded very well to the weaknesses identified in the last visit. It has a new chair and new committees and together these have established a much better balance between support and challenge. The governors have also benefited from good support and training from the LA.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- improve systems to check on the school's effectiveness and planning for improvements – satisfactory.

External support

The school continues to value highly the contribution of the LA consultants and link adviser. The LA has provided substantial support for the school since the inspection in February 2006 and this has been used effectively by the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may now be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen further the capacity of the leadership team to sustain improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Gloucester and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
H M Inspector