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Mrs Debbie Buckingham
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Dear Mrs Buckingham

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

Introduction

Following my visit with Mick Megee, Additional Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 November 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 November 2005.

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, met with the acting headteacher, the headteacher designate, subject leaders, pupils on the school council, parents, governors, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been significant staffing changes since the last visit. A new headteacher has been appointed to take up post in January 2007. She is already working closely with the acting headteacher, governors and LA to make the transition as smooth as possible. An experienced teacher has been appointed on a permanent contract and another senior teacher has been

seconded to the school for a year. Two other teaching posts are currently being covered by temporary appointments.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved. The unvalidated results of the 2006 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 are markedly better than those of previous years, especially at the higher level. Improvement in the standards in writing was a main school priority. Test results improved significantly and were well above the national average. In science, all pupils achieved at least the expected level and 50% achieved the higher level. Results indicate that most pupils made good progress.

At the end of Key Stage 1, results also improved but not as sharply. Standards in mathematics were well above the expected level and more pupils achieved the higher level in writing. In reading, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level and above was above average. Data has been analysed and extra support provided for pupils who did not meet their targets.

In lessons, pupils' standards are broadly average. Pupils are improving due to the good quality of teaching. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made rapid progress with their writing this term. Their work, for example in poetry, shows good use of imagination. The quality of writing in the school varies, with some careless spelling mistakes and untidy handwriting and presentation of work. Many pupils have insufficient knowledge of letter sounds to help them write confidently. Standards in science are improving because pupils have more understanding due to increased hands-on experience. In mathematics, standards are slightly above average. The use of information and communication technology is developing to support pupils' learning.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is beginning to improve. The environment is developing with a range of interesting activities including purposeful play. The school's own evaluation that achievement for the youngest pupils was inadequate is accurate. Insufficient emphasis on providing opportunities for developing independent learning skills hampered their progress. The provision needs to be improved in order to provide the pupils with the most effective start to school and to strengthen the pupils' achievement.

The progress of some pupils, particularly in the current Year 3 and Year 4 class, has been hampered by the unsettled staffing situation. This has resulted in gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school recognises this and is working hard with the LA to improve the situation. During the inspection, most pupils made at least good progress in lessons due to the good teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils with learning difficulties generally made similar progress to their peers, due to effective support by teaching assistants. In a few lessons, more able pupils

were not always sufficiently challenged. The school recognises that provision for the gifted and talented pupils is underdeveloped and has begun to address this by appointing a coordinator and participating in training.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school and how much the school has improved over the last six months. Pupils' behaviour is much improved and is now very good. Attendance is good. Pupils are very kind to each other, show respect to adults, and there are very good relationships throughout the school. Spiritual and moral development are good, with plenty of opportunities provided for pupils to reflect on their own actions and the impact they have on others. Pupils are given fewer opportunities to appreciate the multicultural nature of Britain and so this aspect of their understanding is relatively less well developed. Pupils gain a wide range of skills to prepare them for their future lives. The school day begins with an aerobic session, which staff and pupils attend and join in vigorously.

Quality of provision

Teaching is much improved and is good overall. Some is outstanding. However, half the teachers present in the monitoring visit were temporary. There were numerous strengths in the teaching. Planning was well focused on learning. All teachers explained the learning clearly so that the pupils had a good understanding of their tasks. Most teaching was well prepared and usually involved a range of practical tasks which engaged the pupils' attention. This motivated pupils to greater efforts and extended their learning. Pupils are now given regular opportunities to evaluate their classmates' and their own efforts and this is assisting them in becoming independent learners. The role and impact of teaching assistants (TAs) to support learning are now well established through lesson planning and evaluation. Teamwork between classroom staff was particularly good throughout the school. Occasionally, lessons were not targeted to the needs of individual pupils. In these lessons, some more able pupils were insufficiently challenged and for other pupils the work was too advanced. In a minority of lessons, plenaries were not fully effective because time was too short.

All teachers, including those very recently appointed, have incorporated the new marking guidance in to their practice and pupils now receive regular feedback on their progress and have a clearer understanding about what they need to do next to improve. Assessment systems are now fully in place and all staff are making good use of them to set individual and group targets to the benefit of the pupils.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) has improved. The acting headteacher has brought in a good commercial

assessment system for pupils with learning difficulties so that their progress can be tracked more accurately. However, pupils with behavioural, sensory or communication difficulties require more support in order to maximise their progress and achieve their best. The buildings are poorly designed and are a significant barrier to the admittance of pupils with physical difficulties.

The school curriculum continues to improve and the time allocated now meets the recommended minimum. The pupils are offered a good range of enjoyable opportunities for both academic and personal development.

Progress on the areas of improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable – good.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has provided outstanding leadership during the year. She has had a very significant impact on the school's morale and on the improvement in teaching and standards. The school's self-evaluation is clear and accurate, with well defined priorities for development. This has been underpinned by well focused monitoring of teaching to support improvement.

The acting headteacher and headteacher designate have worked closely together to produce a revised improvement plan with termly success criteria. The headteacher designate has met staff, governors, pupils and parents, and visits the school regularly in order to ensure a smooth transition.

The school regularly seeks the views of parents. Most parents are very pleased with the level of communication. As one parent said, 'Communication has gone from satisfactory to exemplary.' The headteacher and the governors have regular meetings for parents in order to keep parents well informed.

The staffing situation remains unsettled due to staff absence. The school is working hard to minimise the impact this has, for example, by ensuring that structures are in place to help temporary staff settle as quickly as possible into the school. Two experienced teachers have been appointed who provide good role models and valuable expertise. Temporary staff have already shown dedication and commitment to the school and pupils. In order to provide continuity and sustain improvements the staffing situation needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

The development of subject leaders' roles has been hampered by the staffing situation, but appointments have been made for mathematics, science and English. Subject leaders are still at the early stages of driving initiatives but are keen, knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

The governing body is at full strength and its members bring a broad and valuable range of skills. Governors have developed their own knowledge of the work of the school by making regular school visits and developing subject links. They have undertaken useful training which has helped them to develop their role. The chair of governors is very knowledgeable and fully committed to the school's improvement. His drive and determination have been important factors in gaining extra funding and moving the school forward. Governors have developed a more comprehensive understanding of the overall progress being made and the performance of the school. In a recent parent questionnaire, many parents expressed their gratitude to the governors and the acting headteacher.

The school environment is much brighter and more conducive to learning. Attractive and interesting displays promote learning well.

The school ensures that checks are made on adults in the school and also carries out regular health and safety checks.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the school's leadership and management and instil a good working climate so that staff can work together effectively to implement change – good
- implement requirements to ensure that full working background checks are made on all adults before they are cleared to work in the school – good.

External support

The local authority has provided very effective support for the school. In addition to financial support, it has provided a range of well coordinated training for staff and governors. It has worked very effectively to support the acting headteacher and facilitate liaison with the headteacher designate to help ensure smooth transition next term. It has been instrumental in securing experienced teachers to join the staff.

Although the school's current capacity to improve is good, the transient staffing situation means that this is not fully secure.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Resolve the transient nature of the staffing situation as soon as possible.
- Continue the improvements in the provision for the youngest pupils.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Anne Johns
Additional Inspector