

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



17 October 2007

Mrs G Islip
The Headteacher
Huish Episcopi Primary School
North Street
Langport
Somerset
TA10 9RW

Dear Mrs Islip

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HUI SH EPI SCOPI
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Angela Corbett HMI and David Shears, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 October 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Children and Young People for Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Brenda Cusdin
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HUI SH EPISCOPI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 9 and 10 October 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the learning strategy team and the chair of governors.

Context

There have been changes in staffing since the last monitoring visit. A new headteacher has been in post since the beginning of term and there are three new teachers. The deputy headteacher led the school for the second half of the summer term, taking over the leadership role from the interim headteacher who had been in post for seven months. There was considerable staff absence in the second half of the summer term. These absences were unexpected and necessitated lengthy periods of temporary cover in three of the seven classes. In addition, the Key Stage 1 coordinator has been absent for over a year.

Achievement and standards

The Year 6 pupils in 2007 made good progress from their starting points at the beginning of the year, achieving the targets set for them. Their standards in English, mathematics and science matched national expectations and they achieved satisfactorily given their starting points at the beginning of Year 3.

The Year 2 pupils in 2007 made very good progress from their starting points at the beginning of the year in writing and mathematics, and satisfactory progress in reading. However, standards were below national expectations in reading, and well below in writing. Standards in mathematics were closer to national expectations.

The deputy headteacher, subject leaders and staff have developed very useful practice in assessing pupils' standards, setting targets to be achieved and monitoring progress towards them. The school's tracking data shows that progress in English and mathematics varied across the year groups last school year. There was good progress overall in Years 2, 5 and 6 with pupils making significant gains in learning. However, staff absences affected the school's capacity to accelerate learning as effectively over all the year groups.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs that the school's much improved assessment and target setting skills are having a positive impact because pupils showed best progress in the particular skills that the staff targeted. The coordinator for special needs and teaching assistants are working closely together to teach specific literacy skills to pupils. The programme of interventions is carefully constructed and thoroughly evaluated, and the evidence shows that pupils with learning difficulties are benefiting well from the extra support they receive.

Rightly, the new headteacher and staff are looking hard at the evidence about pupils' progress and introducing strategies to eliminate the remaining areas of underachievement. For example, concerns over standards in reading in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have led to a thorough appraisal of pupils' skills, revamped reading resources, and intervention programmes aimed at developing early reading skills.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Both in lessons and around school, pupils show respect for others and respond well when teachers set high expectations for behaviour. Even the youngest pupils implement classroom routines easily. Pupils of all ages spoke positively about teaching and learning.

Pupils are very involved in school life. The school council is working towards a bronze ECO award. They are reviewing whether the school is environmentally friendly, and taking responsibility for making improvements and getting everyone to join in. Pupils in Year 6 relish their roles as play leaders.

The school has continued to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The new headteacher has introduced a comprehensive programme for developing social skills and positive attitudes. An information evening for parents about this new programme was very well attended.

Quality of provision

The staff put considerable thought into ensuring that pupils are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. This hard work has paid off with pupils making best progress in the areas targeted.

A shared observation with the new headteacher confirmed that her appraisal of strengths in teaching and areas to improve is spot on. Currently, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but there is some very effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 and in the Foundation Stage. These staff are successfully promoting both gains in learning and very positive attitudes to learning.

Across the school, teachers carefully forward plan their lessons, clearly sequencing the learning to be achieved. They provide different learning activities and sufficient guidance to ensure that pupils grasp ideas. Marking is regular and staff use this information when planning subsequent lessons. Assessment in Key Stage 1 is highlighting gaps in pupils' prior learning and steps are being taken to plug them. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is carefully tailored to their needs.

The senior team are sensibly discussing ways in which teachers could involve pupils more regularly in assessing their own learning. Such techniques have the added benefit that teachers can gauge quickly how well pupils respond to their teaching and, for instance, adapt the pace and challenge in their questions accordingly.

The school has reviewed the curriculum for the foundation subjects and planned when topics will be covered. Staff recognise that, given the different sizes of year

groups, age ranges in classes may well vary in future years. Rightly, they are working on ways to ensure that, whatever pathway pupils follow during their time at the school, the curriculum will develop their skills steadily.

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

- ensure that all pupils do as well as they should by matching teaching to their needs and covering the curriculum in sufficient depth in all classes – good
- strengthen marking and target setting so that pupils know better how to improve – good.

Leadership and management

The period since the last monitoring visit presented unexpected challenges with severely disrupted staffing. It is a great tribute to the skills and hard work of the staff who were in school and, above all, the deputy headteacher that work on the tasks in the school's improvement plan continued and that morale remained high.

Significant improvements were achieved last year. Good leadership skills made a real impact on pupils' progress in the older year groups, established sound expectations of practice, and brought a much improved insight into pupils' standards and strengths and weaknesses. Unreliable assessments in the youngest age groups in previous years were spotted and steps are being taken to make sure that this does not happen now.

The new headteacher has brought valuable expertise in leadership. The newly formed learning strategy team of headteacher, deputy headteacher, mathematics leader and coordinator for special educational needs has very useful management skills and is committed to leading and monitoring developments across the whole age range. There are sound strategies for ensuring that evaluation of progress is informed by a comprehensive appraisal of standards across all year groups. Already, staff are getting to grips with the gaps in prior attainment in the younger year groups and planning how to address these.

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

- improve the rigour of self-evaluation at all levels of leadership and management so that weaknesses in provision, particularly in teaching, are identified and appropriate action is taken – good.

External support

The local authority has provided helpful guidance and support, enabling the school to make satisfactory progress during a particularly challenging period since the previous inspection. Usefully, consultants have validated the school's assessment in the Foundation Stage and Year 2.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that assessment is reliable in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Plug the gaps in pupils' prior learning and ensure that pupils make steady progress in all year groups.