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1 November 2007

Ms H Okrafo-Smart
Acting Headteacher
The Bardney Church of England and Methodist Primary School
Henry Lane
Bardney
Lincolnshire
LN3 5XJ

Dear Ms Okrafo-Smart

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BARDNEY CHURCH of ENGLAND and METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with David Martin HMI, to your school on 30-31 October, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Diocese, and the Director of Children's Services.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić
HM Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF THE BARDNEY CHURCH of ENGLAND and METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 30-31 October 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and another member of the governing body, the school improvement partner (SIP), and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been significant staff changes since the inspection. Following a period of disruption at senior leadership level over a number of years the substantive headteacher retired at the end of the summer term. Three Key Stage 2 teachers also left the school at that time. The LA appointed an interim headteacher for four days per week, but despite a lengthy recruitment campaign, there have been two unsuccessful attempts to appoint a permanent headteacher. Governors expect an appointment commencing Easter 2008. A newly qualified teacher was appointed at Easter 2007, just prior to the last inspection, but the school has had limited capacity to provide a systematic programme of support, monitoring and development. Two new teachers were recruited for September, one permanent and one temporary, to cover Key Stage 2 classes. The absence of a teaching assistant has impeded the level of support within the school recently.

Additional governors were assigned by the LA to strengthen the monitoring of the school's work. Three vacancies remain on the governing body. A new SIP was appointed to work with the school commencing September 2007. From September new pupil groupings have been introduced in response to changing numbers and to provide discrete teaching for Year 6 pupils.

Achievement and standards

Children in the Foundation Stage made good progress and achieved well in 2007. However, this rate of progress has not been sustained through Key Stages 1 and 2. In 2007 standards in Key Stage 1 and 2 declined from those reached in 2006. In Key Stage 1 this was the result of boys' lower standards in reading and mathematics, with too few pupils reaching higher levels, especially in reading. In Key Stage 2 there was a significant dip in standards in English, mathematics and science, which were below national averages. Boys' standards in mathematics were exceptionally low and the more able pupils did not reach the high levels expected given their prior attainment. However, published data indicates that overall achievement increased in 2007 compared with the previous year. These results have not been rigorously analysed within the school to bring about improvements in a systematic way.

As a response to these results the school has established a central target setting and tracking system. Targets have now been adjusted to reflect more accurate

assessment, supported by LA consultants. The school is beginning to collect assessment information in a planned way. This has highlighted insecurity amongst some teachers in the assessment of progress using sub-levels. Moreover, these assessments and lesson observations show that many pupils do not make the progress they should. However, their progress in some lessons is good. Intervention strategies to tackle aspects of pupil underperformance are insufficiently developed. Teaching assistants are yet to attend training to develop their skills and expertise in this area.

Pupils are more aware of their targets through tracking sheets, and many are able to identify aspects of their work needing improvement. Pupils now attend consultation meetings with parents where individual targets and priorities are discussed. Parents have welcomed the additional information about progress and the increase in homework to improve literacy and numeracy.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Improve achievement and standards, especially for higher attaining pupils and involve all pupils thoroughly in target setting and in measuring progress – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Good progress has been made against all the actions planned to improve attendance. The attendance policy has been effectively reviewed and communicated to parents through the parents' forum and newsletters. Two governors have been assigned to monitor this area of work and all governors receive half-termly reports. Attendance has improved considerably to above that of the average primary school and is much higher than at the same time last year. Unauthorised absence has fallen to very low levels. The school has rightly identified parental holidays taken during term time as an issue to address further.

Pupils report that behaviour is much improved this term because of higher expectations and recent changes to staffing. Consequently, pupils are showing greater enjoyment in their learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Implement successfully the plans that have been drawn up to improve pupils' attendance – good

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains too variable, with some that is inadequate. Some new strategies have been introduced since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Learning objectives are now shared routinely in lessons to guide the pupils' work. This is implemented most successfully in the combined Foundation Stage and Year 1 class and in Year 6 where pupils are actively involved in identifying success criteria against which to measure their

progress. Interactive whiteboards are used in all classrooms to support the sharing of learning objectives.

In the best lessons assessment information is used well and pupils have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn, and how this fits with previous learning. There is a good balance between activities which are carefully planned to develop skills and promote independence as observed in literacy with younger pupils. Questions are effectively used to deepen understanding and to encourage participation. Pupils are expected to discuss ideas, and to think for themselves.

In the inadequate lessons pupils are often expected to listen for too long. Pupils become too dependent on adults in the classroom and do not develop the confidence to think for themselves. The pace of these lessons is slow as learning activities are not well pitched to engage pupils, or focused sufficiently well on the next steps in their learning. As a result some pupils lose interest and become restless. Pupils' understanding of their work is not routinely checked which can lead to time being wasted. There are insufficient opportunities to consolidate learning. Although assessment information is available, planning does not consistently ensure that tasks are suited to pupils' needs, or build on prior learning.

The school is rightly concentrating on raising standards in English and mathematics which is reflected in the balance of the curriculum. Apart from the Foundation Stage and Year 1 where the curriculum continues to provide an integrated and imaginative approach, the timetable for Years 2 to 6 is structured into discrete lessons with few links to support the transfer of skills.

Pupils have an improved understanding of their individual targets for literacy and numeracy. Target sheets are available in child-friendly language to support progression. However, marking is inconsistent and comments do not routinely focus on areas for improvement. There is little evidence of the impact of teachers' marking, for example on presentation or the completion of work. Where comments are made, time is not always built in to allow pupils to respond.

Steps have been taken since the last inspection to ensure that safeguarding arrangements fully meet current requirements.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Ensure that teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' progress to devise lessons that interest and challenge all pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has focussed strongly on improving weak management systems in the school in the autumn term, although progress was weak in the summer term following the inspection. Staffing is more stable due to recent appointments. These changes have made a significant improvement on day-to-day organisation and have created a calm, orderly atmosphere where there can be a renewed focus on teaching and learning and pupil progress. Assessment processes have greatly improved, as has the use of data at whole-school level. School

development planning is more detailed and generally has clearly stated outcomes for pupils. The plan is regularly evaluated but some areas are being tackled with greater urgency than others, resulting in uneven progress.

There has been external monitoring of teaching and learning through the LA advisor and SIP. Governors also have a regular programme of classroom visits although there is no planned method of feeding back findings to teaching staff. Other monitoring has taken place through school leaders and managers conducting work sampling and checking on planning and assessment. The school is yet to make full use of these findings in a systematic way to support improvement. School leaders have not regularly monitored teaching through observation. As a result they have been unable to take action to improve classroom practice through coaching or the modelling and sharing of good practice. Similarly, the role of subject coordinators is at an early stage of development. The main support to the school is delivered by external consultants provided by the LA, including an Advanced Skills Teacher. This support is at an early stage in terms of impact and is not building capacity in the school quickly enough.

The acting headteacher has not delegated responsibility to other key managers for the main issues facing the school. The deputy headteacher has little time to develop teaching and assessment skills across the school. This is particularly true in terms of support for the newly qualified teacher. Governors are strongly committed to improving the school and have links with key areas for improvement. The process to recruit a permanent headteacher is well advanced but prior to this appointment the capacity to improve is limited. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well but is not taking timely action to remedy unevenness in teaching and learning and thereby raise standards.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Ensure that all those in leadership and management positions monitor their work rigorously, take urgent action to address shortcomings and evaluate the impact of their actions - inadequate

External support

The LA statement of action provides an appropriate range of support. The main priority was to bring stability to the school by assigning an acting headteacher and appointing teaching staff. This was achieved during the summer term along with the construction of the action plan. There has been limited impact on the main improvement areas as much of the training is scheduled for later in the autumn term. Although some monitoring information has been gathered it has yet to be followed through in order to make improvement. The roles and relationship between school leaders, governors, the LA and SIP are yet to be clearly defined. However, the SIP has established a good relationship with the school and has taken part in a classroom monitoring exercise. Planning to build and sustain capacity within the school has been very limited.

Priorities for further improvement

- Use available management time to establish a rigorous system of classroom observation to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.