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28 March 2008

Mrs Linda Simmonds
The Headteacher
Colyton Primary School
The Butts
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Devon
EX24 6NU

Dear Mrs Simmonds

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF COLYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Martin James, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 March 2008, 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 November 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. 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 and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Laurie Lewin
Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF COLYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, staff, a group of Year 6 pupils, the chair of governors and a parent governor, a representative from the local authority and a group of parents.

Context

After the school's inspection in November 2007, the headteacher in post at that time resigned with immediate effect. An acting headteacher took over for a short period. The governors appointed an experienced interim headteacher for the current term and have recently appointed a substantive headteacher who takes up his post at the start of the summer term. The Deputy Headteacher, who was absent and in hospital prior to and during the Inspection, returned to school in December 2007. The Foundation Stage teacher resigned after the last inspection and the class concerned has been taught by an experienced teacher on secondment from a school in the local area. The number of pupils on roll has dropped significantly.

Achievement and standards

Work in pupils' books shows that, since November 2007, pupils are making satisfactory progress. This was also evident during most of the lessons seen. The school is crucially aware of the need to accelerate pupils' progress to a greater extent in order to catch up on the significant legacy of underachievement that remains in many year groups in English, mathematics and science. Specific improvements to the way in which pupils present their work is having a good effect. Pupils now take more pride in their work and approach tasks with care and consideration. Improvements made in the provision for teaching in the Reception/Year 1 class are impressive, resulting in the Reception children, in particular, now making good progress. Also, significant upgrades to the provision for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean these individuals are now progressing better. Too often though, higher attaining pupils do the same work as their classmates and are not sufficiently challenged. As a result, they are not making the progress they should.

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

- raise pupils' achievement and standards, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well and most enjoy school. Year 6 pupils felt that work is now 'more interesting than it used to be'. This is very clear in the good levels of concentration and motivation displayed by pupils in lessons. Pupils' behaviour has improved at break times. Initiatives by the staff to create better facilities and activities for pupils during these times have paid off. Incidents of bad behaviour in the playground have largely become a 'thing of the past'. Pupils are especially impressed by this improvement. They now feel confident that if a problem occurs it will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Many pupils show that they are articulate and capable of contributing well in classroom discussions, but they do not always do so confidently. Similarly, they do not always work well independently, relying too much on adult guidance before starting tasks that they are well equipped to work on by themselves. Low standards reached by pupils in English, mathematics and science mean they are not adequately prepared for coping successfully in the future.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving teaching and learning. Planning now ensures that lessons are of a better quality and provide tasks that engage and interest the pupils to a greater extent than previously. Records of progress and lessons seen show that teaching for the Reception age children is now consistently good.

Clear systems have been introduced to help teachers track pupils' progress and to identify any individuals who are under achieving. This has helped a lot to indicate to staff and, in particular the special educational needs coordinator, the groups of pupils or individuals in need of extra support or intervention. The booster and intervention work staff provide for these groups and individuals is helping to accelerate the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other lower attaining pupils.

Teachers have made a successful start in using the information about pupils' progress, gained from the new tracking systems, to help them plan work in lessons and to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils also now have targets set to help them improve. However, these are not always sufficiently well focused to cater for the needs of all individuals. Also, assessment information is not yet used with enough precision to ensure that all groups are sufficiently challenged by the work they do. This is particularly the case for higher attaining pupils.

Teachers often question pupils effectively and give some useful chances for discussion. However, too many pupils remain passive learners in lessons because there are not always enough planned opportunities for lively interaction and opportunities for pupils to develop an independent approach to pursuing areas of learning. Teachers mark work regularly and this provides encouragement for pupils. However, the marking does not always give enough clarity to pupils on how they can make further improvements. The school is fully aware of the need to upgrade teaching provision further in order to overcome the legacy of underachievement evident in many year groups.

All aspects of the school's systems for safeguarding the pupils have been reinforced. The issues concerning playground supervision and health and safety assessment raised at the time of the last inspection have been suitably addressed. In particular, careful supervision of the playground has resulted in much reduced incidence of misbehaviour or accidents.

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

- ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and support, improving particularly the way teachers engage pupils' interest and match learning to their individual needs – satisfactory
- use assessment of pupils' attainment and progress more effectively to raise the expectations of staff, set appropriately challenging targets, and show pupils how to improve – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have been strengthened by the good work of the interim headteacher. She has succeeded in bringing the staff together and getting them to work as a team. There is now a real sense of determination and commitment to improve the quality of education and drive up standards. As a result, staff have embraced the extra training opportunities provided through the local authority's intensive support programme and have embarked successfully on moving forward with the post Ofsted action plans. The actions plans and strategies are, in the main, appropriate to enable the school to address its weaknesses. In particular, the training input has helped teachers improve the quality of their lesson planning and helped them devise targets for pupils' progress. There is insufficient focus though, within the action plans, to show how performance in science will be developed so that pupils' progress will be improved at the same rate as is planned for English and mathematics. The process of devising clear action plans has had the added benefit of clarifying the roles of the senior management team and the subject coordinators. However, these roles remain at an early stage of development and much reliance is placed on external training and support to help them move forward with improvements. The school and the local authority have rightly identified that the effectiveness of senior leaders needs to be rapidly improved in order to speed up the school's progress. Governors have worked well to re-establish themselves as a team. Like the staff, they too have embraced training from the interim headteacher and local authority and this now places them in a stronger position to monitor the school's effectiveness and progress and provide support.

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

- strengthen leadership and management to make sure strategies introduced to improve provision and lift pupils' achievement are successful – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action is good. It focuses well on the main areas to improve the performance of all staff. The plan contains clear success criteria and

realistic targets for the school to achieve. Targets for the current term are generally on track. However, the local authority is rightly keen to see greater improvement in accelerating pupils' progress through more regular occurrence of good teaching across the school than is presently the case. The intensive support programme that runs alongside the current action plans is effective in boosting the skills and confidence of staff. The local authority's assistance for the school in implementing new assessment systems is especially helpful in underpinning improved teaching. This initiative has been well received by staff. Advisory staff have given good support and training to help governors become more effective in carrying out their roles. The local authority is keeping the school under close scrutiny and has good systems in place to ensure that it regularly monitors and supports the work of staff.

Priorities for further improvement

In addition to continuing to tackle the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2007, the school should:

- include actions for improving provision and standards in science in planning for the next academic year.