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23 April 2008

Mr S Crumpler
The Acting Headteacher
Shaftesbury Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Crumpler

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SHAFTESBURY
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Stephanie Matthews and Robin Thelwell, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 16 and 17 April 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 December 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, the Director of Children's Services for Dorset and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Salisbury.

Yours sincerely

David Townsend
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF SHAFTESBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 16 and 17 April 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, talked with pupils, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, a range of staff, a group of governors and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Following the last inspection, an interim headteacher, a senior local authority inspector, was appointed to lead the school for the first part of the spring term. An acting headteacher then took up post on 25 February 2008. The governing body has been reorganised. The local authority has appointed two additional governors and a committee, the school improvement group, has been formed to oversee progress with the school's action plans.

Achievement and standards

Assessment data predicts that standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 may be closer to the national average this year and this indicates that overall progress is now improving in English and mathematics in Years 2 and 6. Early monitoring by the school and inspection evidence also suggest improving progress in lessons across other year groups. However, standards in science, whilst improving, remain below average for the older pupils, some of whom remain at risk of underachieving.

There is now a clearer focus on writing across the school. Teachers now teach writing more consistently and there is a clear emphasis on planning and on the use of speaking and listening and paired and group work to give pupils greater confidence. Some writing homework is now being set. Work displayed in some classrooms celebrates pupils' success in both extended and creative writing and reflects teachers' growing ability in assessing progress.

Improvements have been secured to teaching and learning in science, although it is too early to see the full effect of improvements on pupils' results. Science lessons are now more active, with a clear emphasis on investigation. Teachers are starting to use resources more effectively and pupils show that they enjoy working in groups to conduct investigations and experiments. There is also a growing emphasis on recording findings that supports pupils in their ability to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Pupils' skills in prediction and in using scientific vocabulary are beginning to improve, albeit from low starting points. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels remains very low. Work has just started on ensuring teachers have a clearer understanding of progression in learning in this subject to be able to better challenge all pupils and especially higher achievers.

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

- improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing across the school and in science between Years 3 and 6 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

This aspect of the school was found to be good at the time of the previous inspection and this continues to be the case. Both behaviour and attendance are good and pupils contribute well to the local and wider community, for example by raising money for a water project in Fiji. They show a good awareness of the environment, discuss moral issues confidently, and their improving cultural awareness is illustrated by the displays around the school.

Pupils are enthusiastic about many aspects of school life. They feel safe in school and enjoy extra-curricular activities, particularly sport. The school has Active School status and is working towards the Healthy School award. Pupils are well aware of the need to make sensible lifestyle choices and can talk about what makes up a healthy lunchbox. They take on a variety of responsibilities around the school, for example helping with younger pupils or as school councillors or monitors in the library. By Year 6, pupils say that they feel well prepared for secondary education. Basic skills are now more secure and pupils have more experience of group and paired work and of taking responsibility for their own learning.

Quality of provision

A satisfactory start has been made to addressing weaknesses in teaching. Whilst all teaching and learning observed during the monitoring visit was satisfactory, and at times good, there are not enough instances of good teaching to bring about the higher rates of progress necessary to address pupils' past underachievement.

Planning has improved and is now more consistent across the school. In most cases, teachers explain learning objectives at the start of lessons, however, this is not always so. Although teachers mainly provide tasks that are suitably matched to pupils' stages of learning, able pupils are not sufficiently challenged or set rigorous time targets for completing work. As a consequence, the quality, extent and pace of learning are reduced.

The quality of teachers' questioning of pupils also varies. Where the practice is good, teachers give pupils opportunities to work in pairs and ask questions that help pupils clarify their thinking and consider their response. Too often though, questions are not sufficiently well focused to support learning. The school does not make sufficient use of its good information and communication technology (ICT) resources, especially interactive whiteboards, to provide a visual stimulus. When used well, as in a successful Year 5 science lesson on seed dispersal, learning is enhanced considerably. Whilst teachers have a good rapport with pupils and give good oral feedback in class, the quality of marking is still inconsistent. It does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve. Where teaching is good, pupils present as enthusiastic participants in learning, but there are insufficient instances of such practice. An improvement since the last inspection is that throughout the school

teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, especially those with learning difficulties.

The curriculum, which was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection, has been maintained and strengthened. More time has been allocated to teaching science at Key Stage 1, and across the school an emphasis has been given to investigational work. The focus given to improving the quality of writing across the school is evident in examples of extended writing, often cross curricular in nature, such as Year 2 pupils writing entries for Pepys' diary concerning the Fire of London, and the informative pamphlets about the Indian village of Chembakoli produced by Year 4.

Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of pupils, including child protection and health and safety arrangements, remain secure. The good personal support given to pupils with learning difficulties and those deemed vulnerable, together with good links maintained with an increasing number of outside agencies, enable them to make similar progress to other pupils. Academic guidance is improving. The school has recently introduced procedures to monitor and track pupils' progress towards end of year targets in English, mathematics and science. However, such procedures, and the subsequent information they provide, have yet to become securely established as day to day practice to help plan future learning or to modify curriculum provision. The imminent writing of an assessment policy should help to secure a whole school approach to its practice. Although most pupils have targets for learning, few know them nor are they used sufficiently within lessons as a focus to improve pupils' performance.

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

- increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better to bring about accelerated progress for pupils – satisfactory
- use the information from assessments to set suitably challenging targets for individual pupils and to monitor their ongoing progress more rigorously – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has been successful in raising staff morale and establishing a shared commitment to school improvement. He has ensured there is good communication with parents who continue to offer the school their support. New management structures and strategies have been introduced. The deputy headteacher has provided effective support in ensuring the efficient day to day running of the school. Expectations have also been raised. Improvements to classroom practice and pupils' progress rates are now in evidence.

Since the last inspection, the process of reorganising teaching and leadership responsibilities has begun. The process of training staff for their duties and providing sufficient time for leaders to fulfil their roles is under way. The new leadership team has a clearer sense of its function and is now monitoring pupils' progress with increased accuracy and rigour. Processes for identifying and supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have also been strengthened. Middle leaders

have begun establishing the strengths and weaknesses in subjects with increased confidence, although this process is still at an early stage.

These changes have created some of the structures needed to take the school forward. However, it is too soon to judge their full impact. Furthermore, the schedule of monitoring is not yet robust enough to ensure that inconsistencies in practice have been fully identified and addressed. For example, leaders have yet to evaluate and fully play a role in securing improvements to teaching and learning. The school's self-evaluation form (SEF) has not been updated. The school improvement plan provides appropriate challenge and clear criteria against which to judge progress although, to date, these have only been partly been met.

The governance of the school is improving rapidly. Its capacity to oversee the school's work has been strengthened by new appointments and expertise. Its action plan for monitoring is closely linked to the school and LA action plans. By setting up its school improvement group and establishing link governors who now regularly meet with school leaders, the governors have begun to monitor actively the progress being made with each action plan. Governors now have a better knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide increased levels of challenge and support to senior leaders.

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

- strengthen the capacity of leadership and management to set a clear direction for the school, monitor its effectiveness and improve standards – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action and related support are good and confirm its commitment to the school's improvement and to its long term future as an invaluable part of the local community. The statement is well matched to the school's planning and the success criteria outline clearly the range and extent of improvements required within tight timescales. The link school improvement officer continues to give close and effective support to the school and has a thorough understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The local authority has already put in place a broad range of effective support for the school, including extensive consultancy advice for teachers and subject leaders on how to improve the quality of classroom provision in English, science and in the early years classes. This high level of support for the school will be kept under continual review and reduced in line with the development of the school's internal capacity to improve.