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25 November 2008

Ms H Okrafo-Smart
Interim Headteacher
The Bardney Church of England and Methodist 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 to your school on 5-6 November 2008, 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 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Bardney Church of England and Methodist Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 5-6 November 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last visit a member of Lincolnshire's leadership team joined the school for two days per week during the summer term reducing to one day per week from September. The Year 2 and 3 class teacher left during the summer term requiring a short term appointment until the end of term. A seconded teacher joined the school and leadership team in September for one year. There have been a number of changes within the governing body with one vacancy remaining.

Achievement and standards

The school is able to demonstrate some improvements in standards and achievement since being subject to special measures but the pattern remains uneven across year groups, subjects and groups of learners. Standards in Key Stage 2 improved significantly in 2008 as shown in national test performance in English, mathematics and science. This was boosted by the improvement of boys' standards in all core subjects and the high standards reached by girls in science. Improved teaching and careful planning accelerated rates of progress during Year 6, and this covered previous gaps in learning. However, given attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 for this cohort progress was less than expected. In contrast, the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 declined sharply in all subjects, especially writing. These results disguise significant differences between boys and girls. The standards reached by girls were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys' standards were exceptionally low in all aspects. Although a number of intervention strategies were in place they were not planned carefully enough to meet the specific learning needs of pupils.

As a response to these results, improvements have been made to tracking and assessment systems to enable greater accuracy in the monitoring of progress. In addition the use of national materials for assessing pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy skills has increased confidence and expertise, supported by regular moderation of work samples across the school. Targets have been revised to build in greater challenge. Regular reviews of progress now enable targets to be adjusted and intervention planned to focus more precisely on specific skills with steps to measure progress.

External support has aided the moderation and assessment of reading levels. Planning for guided reading has been sharpened by identifying a specific assessment

focus to be developed and reinforced. This approach is strengthening the teaching of reading and is supported by the collection of evidence to demonstrate progress over time. Pupils enjoy these sessions which are tailored to their learning needs. Cross curricular work is supporting the development of writing skills, with projects selected to appeal to boys. Partnership with a neighbouring school is also supporting the sharing of ideas and practice. Samples of pupils' unaided work demonstrate the benefits of this initiative. An analysis of numeracy skills continues to identify gaps in learning which is used more effectively to co-ordinate work across classes.

The benefits of these strategies can be seen in measures of progress in reading, writing and numeracy this term, confirmed by classroom observation. However, the legacy of weaknesses in teaching and intervention means those pupils in Years 3 and 4 have significant ground to make up.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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

Pupils enjoy their time in school and display positive attitudes and relationships. Attendance levels have been sustained at the national average. The school continues to be successful in reducing the number of pupils taking term time holidays. Pupils are responding positively to the wider range of enrichment opportunities.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Implement successfully the plans that have been drawn up to improve pupils' attendance—satisfactory

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. None is unsatisfactory, and much is good. Security in the use of assessment has raised expectations and supported further refinement in planning. There is greater awareness of the crucial link between accurate assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and the planning of learning activities. Subject leaders are now working together to agree priorities and determine tiered literacy and numeracy targets for each class. This is helping pupils to understand the steps they need to take to improve. Targets are displayed and increasingly used during lessons to reinforce learning. Lessons have a clear structure and teachers have extended the range of tasks to match individual and group needs. All lesson plans include clear learning objectives. However strategies to check learning within lessons is a weaker aspect, consequently some pupils lose interest and their learning becomes muddled. In the most effective lessons expectations are very high and pupils are challenged by activities to stimulate their interest and to

make them think. Questions are used effectively to probe and assess understanding. Many pupils talk confidently to their partners about their learning and to share ideas.

Resources have been directed to support the class most affected by a lack of continuity in teaching. The current teacher is skilfully employing a range of positive behaviour strategies to improve levels of concentration, and to reduce low level disruption. This is supported further through positive relationships and improved curriculum planning, including topics to engage the interests of the class. There is scope for additional targeted support to accelerate the confidence and skills of individual pupils.

The role of teaching assistants has strengthened considerably as a result of training and dedicated planning time. This has increased confidence, raised expectation and strengthened knowledge of specific learning goals. Teaching assistants are working more closely with teaching staff to support the learning of individuals and groups. The planning of intervention programmes now provides teaching assistants with a clear structure for delivery. Regular discussions with class teachers enable progress to be monitored and evaluated to inform adjustments and next steps.

The improved learning environment in classrooms is providing additional support for learning. The 'working wall' is a helpful point of reference to refresh learning from previous lessons. The quality of marking continues to develop but does not routinely provide specific guidance on how to improve. However, there are some good examples, such as the designated 'comment time' which enables pupils to respond to feedback and improve or extend their learning.

The inclusion of additional cross curricular thematic work to promote links between subjects and to focus on key skills, continues to strengthen the curriculum.

All statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are securely in place.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Leadership and management

Since the last visit there has been a greater sense of urgency to drive initiatives to accelerate progress. The interim headteacher has streamlined the improvement plan to provide a sharper focus on priority areas. Regular training sessions have supported stronger team working and confidence across the staff. Community events, parents' meetings and questionnaires completed by new parents indicate a higher level of confidence in the school. Revisions to teaching groups and the matching of teachers to cohorts have contributed to a purposeful start to the academic year.

Increased leadership capacity during the summer term strengthened data tracking systems, leading to greater challenge in key stage targets. Although progress is now tracked effectively key messages about achievement and standards are not highlighted, linked to national expectations, pupils' prior attainment or explored sufficiently for groups of learners. Nevertheless, improved tracking of individual pupils has enabled leaders to deploy teaching assistants more effectively and flexibly on the basis of emerging needs.

Regular monitoring activities are now built into the school's work although there is scope for greater flexibility to ensure that evaluation findings are used swiftly to support improvements. Subject leaders have continued to develop confidence and expertise in carrying out a range of assessment, monitoring and evaluation activities including test analysis, assisted by external support. Regular feedback about the quality of teaching and learning is provided for staff. However, classroom observation is not yet a routine feature of the subject leaders' role. Consequently a coaching or team teaching approach, to embed specific teaching and learning techniques is underdeveloped. Also, expertise across the teaching staff is not fully utilised to strengthen consistency.

The relatively new membership of the governing body benefits from stronger representation from the local community. Training is planned to enable an appropriate balance between support and challenge, specifically on data, monitoring and evaluation. Although at an early stage, governors have agreed 'buddy' links with each year group and subject leaders. Governors also have designated responsibility for each priority in the school's improvement plan. Some governors have visited the school to gather first hand evidence about how well the school is working.

Although the level of external support is declining, governors and the LA have yet to establish a detailed 'exit' strategy moving from special measures, including the appointment of a permanent headteacher to ensure improvements are sustained.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The LA has provided effective support through the deployment of a member of Lincolnshire's leadership team to refine the school's tracking and target setting procedures. The appointment of an experienced seconded teacher has increased stability in teaching. LA consultants have provided training and support to secure accurate assessment and moderation of standards in reading, and for using the assessing pupils' progress materials in literacy and numeracy. Partnership with a local school has facilitated joint planning for cross curricular developments. A School Improvement Partner has continued to assist in the validation of the school's evaluation of its work and improvements.

Priorities for further improvement

- Prepare transition arrangements to show how the school expects to move from special measures, taking account of the expected reduction in leadership time arising from the planned appointment of a teaching headteacher.