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25 September 2008

Mrs S Jones
The Headteacher
Clehonger CofE Primary School
Gosmore Road
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HR2 9SN

Dear Mrs Jones

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Clehonger CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Barbara Crane, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 September 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed only after consultation with HMI.

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 Director of Education for the Diocese of Hereford, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Herefordshire.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Clehonger CofE Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 September 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the learning mentor, the chair of governors and another governor, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school's context.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain below national expectations and gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are still evident in lessons. Progress is still too patchy across the school and across subjects. However, the school's data, which is now much more accurate, shows that more pupils are now making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics and some pupils are starting to make good progress. Progress in writing is not as consistent as in reading and the school is aware that the improvement of writing is a priority. The school does not yet have enough accurate information about pupils' achievement in science, but this situation is improving.

In lessons, pupils generally made at least satisfactory progress. Progress was best when teachers paid careful attention to the learning needs of individuals and where independent activities were carefully planned to meet those needs.

Unvalidated results from end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2008 indicate some improvement when compared to 2007 results, both in the number of pupils who met age related expectations and the progress they made during the key stage.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement in English, mathematics and science to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

The youngest children have settled well into the routines of the school day because of sensitive support from adults. Pupils are friendly, polite and well behaved. They take good care of each other, for example older pupils enjoy helping the younger ones with lunchtime routines. Good relationships are evident everywhere and contribute to the school's calm atmosphere. Pupils are responding well in lessons to the higher expectations teachers now have of them and are enjoying their learning. There are positive signs that, following the decisive action taken by the headteacher

to alert parents to the impact of poor attendance on their children's progress, attendance figures are rising.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching observed during the monitoring inspection was satisfactory overall. The pace and structure of lessons was better than observed during the previous monitoring inspection and as a result there was a more suitable balance between whole class and individual work. This corresponds with the findings from the headteacher's observations.

In the best lessons, high expectations were evident from the outset. Careful questioning encouraged pupils to think and teachers' already good knowledge of the pupils enabled them to pitch questions at the right level for individuals. In these lessons there was a well paced whole class opening to the lesson, moving appropriately swiftly into small group and individual work with a range of well planned tasks. Pupils with learning difficulties were both supported and challenged and suitable extension work was provided for the most able pupils. Some of the less successful lessons were over complicated, with the consequence that some of the core purpose of the lesson, for example writing, was lost. The promotion of pupils' writing through the careful use of phonics and other relevant strategies is an area which requires improvement throughout the school.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), children's learning was promoted best when adults were directly engaged with individuals or small groups. On these occasions, adults adapted the level of challenge for children very successfully. At other times, when children were working independently from adults, children's learning was slower because the activities from which they could choose were not sufficiently fine tuned to suit children's different stages of development.

Planning is not yet sufficiently consistent in identifying exactly what pupils at different stages and levels need to learn, so lessons do not always have a sharp enough focus on the next steps pupils need to take to improve. However, because much of the planning has improved and is taking better account of the range of pupils' needs, a more suitable range of learning activities was observed in lessons.

The headteacher, in conjunction with the special educational needs (SEN) coordinator, has reduced the school's SEN list and rationalised the identification of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). There are now appropriately fewer pupils identified as having learning difficulties and a greater understanding within the school of all pupils' individual needs. There has been a careful audit of the provision pupils with LDD currently receive, and an analysis of what additional support is needed is underway. Revised individual education plans are more suitable than older versions and concentrate appropriately on the additional support needed. Planning and teaching for pupils with LDD have shown some improvement. In some lessons, teachers and support staff used a range of appropriate strategies to support LDD pupils to make progress. In other lessons, support was not well focused, so

opportunities for learning were missed. The school is aware that attention now needs to be paid to training and supporting staff for this aspect of their work, and to developing a range of strategies which all staff should use to support LDD learners in all lessons.

The school now has a robust and easy to understand system to track pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6. The headteacher is confident that the assessment data which is included is accurate enough to allow teachers to plan and to meet pupils' needs. EYFS staff are skilled in assessing children's progress. However, these assessments are not recorded often enough to build up a useful picture about what children can do and what they need to learn.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve pupils' learning by ensuring that accurate assessment information is used to plan lessons that meet the needs of the wide range of abilities – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has systematically addressed the additional areas for improvement identified at the last monitoring inspection, as well as continuing to focus on the original areas for improvement. She has been well supported by the deputy headteacher and the staff. Actions taken have been largely effective in promoting further improvement. Decisive and effective action has been taken to improve attendance and to rationalise the school's identification of LDD pupils. The system to track pupils' progress has been suitably refined. Senior leaders are now able to see quickly which pupils are not making progress and, as a result, have an accurate understanding of achievement and standards in Years 1 to 6, although this not robust enough for the EYFS. Regular meetings between the headteacher and teachers to discuss pupils' progress are an important step towards holding teachers to account, although the notes from the meetings indicate that sometimes the actions planned are not focused clearly enough on outcomes for the pupils.

The headteacher's evaluation of the progress the school has made and its current performance is increasingly accurate, and she has identified accurately many of the next priorities for the school.

Governors are very focused on the school's improvement and understand the school's strengths and the areas which still need to improve. They have actively sought to secure the further support needed from the LA, and have been disappointed that this has not been forthcoming. Governors have been closely involved in decisions about school organisation and staffing. They are keen to receive further training to support them in interpreting data. Importantly, they have kept parents well informed about the school's progress.

Parents are keen to support the school to continue to improve. A meeting to discuss the school's progress was well attended. A small group of parents, assisted by a

much larger group, has built an imaginative garden in the school grounds, which has been carefully designed to support pupils' learning. Pupils have thoroughly enjoyed being involved in its design and it has already enhanced the school environment.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance and improving areas of underachievement – satisfactory.

External support

Support from the LA has been too variable. The last monitoring visit identified the need for the LA to provide focused support to ensure that all teaching is at least satisfactory. This action has not been carried out with the required urgency. While the support has been planned, it had not begun at the time of this monitoring inspection. The support provided by LA staff has not been consistently coordinated, nor its impact evaluated in order that it can be responsive to the school's needs. However, importantly, the contact inspector has begun to take this coordinating role, which is welcomed by the school. He is well informed about the school's needs and understands the importance of ensuring that the support and its focus are carefully negotiated with the school.

Where support has been provided it has had a reasonable impact. The school has welcomed the support given to help them refine the criteria for identifying which pupils have LDD and which are underachieving. This support is now rightly focused on helping the school to put into place the appropriate provision for the pupils. Support in this area remains a priority. Literacy and numeracy support has been generally focused on improving teaching and the curriculum in these areas. This has been useful for the school and has resulted in improvements in teachers' knowledge and skills. The majority of teachers now need the opportunity to develop their own methods of working under the direction of the headteacher, and to identify for themselves what the priorities are for their class.

Priorities for further improvement

- Define the best ways in which both teachers and support staff can support LDD pupils in lessons, and provide appropriate guidance and training to help them to do so effectively.
- Ensure that assessment in the EYFS is frequent, is carefully recorded, and is used to fine tune activities to suit children's different stages of development.
- Work in partnership with the LA to refocus the support provided on the school's current priorities of the development of detailed assessment in literacy, numeracy and science; the improvement of LDD provision; the development of phonics; and, the continued improvement of the quality of teaching so that all teaching is at least satisfactory.