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6 November 2008

Mrs Julie Hall
Headteacher
Mundford Church of England Primary
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Norfolk
IP26 5ED

Dear Mrs Hall

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Mundford Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with George Derby, Additional Inspector, to your school on October 16 and 17th, 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 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 Diocese of Norwich, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Cousins

Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Mundford Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 October 2008.

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, analysed pupils' work, scrutinised documents, met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, a governor, the senior leadership team, literacy, numeracy and science subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and one representative from the Local Authority (LA).

Context

Since the last visit two members of the teaching staff have left the school. The school has restructured classes and reduced the number of pupils in most Key Stage 2 classes. The teaching staff is more stable and only one member is temporary. The school is part of the LA 'Improving Schools Partnership'.

Achievement and standards

Progress in lessons is satisfactory. Pupils' basic skills are developed suitably because staff use more effective methods in lessons. Staff are working carefully to realise the end of year targets that the school has set for Year 6 pupils. Last term's assessments show that Year 6 pupils' attainments in reading, writing and mathematics are below national expectations, with writing standards the lowest. Pupils' progress in mathematics is similar to their progress in reading and writing. This is because the school has given teachers extra training in mathematics, which is increasing pupils' progress in this subject. The school plans to give extra tuition to particular groups of pupils as soon as it has been given extra funding. This would enable more pupils to reach at least average levels of attainment. In Year 6, more able pupils are identified for extension work so that they have a greater opportunity to gain higher levels of attainment. All mathematics and writing sessions in Years 3 to 6 are being supported by a teaching assistant. An analysis of Year 6 pupils' books demonstrates that they are making more consistent gains in their learning this year. However, in the 2008 Year 6 tests, indications are that standards were below average. Because of the legacy of underachievement some pupils did not make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2.

More rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress is occurring throughout the school. A thorough tracking system enables staff to monitor pupils' half-termly progress successfully. The tracking system highlights those pupils who are underachieving. This means staff are clearer about the pupils who would benefit from further support. The progress of pupils who have additional needs is effectively tracked and they make adequate progress.

Standards in Year 2 assessments in 2008 were above average in reading and average in writing and mathematics. These pupils have made at least satisfactory progress from their starting points in Year 1. Year 2 pupils are making sound progress so far this year, partly because they have a full time teacher in place. This is a significant improvement since the last visit when pupils in Year 2 were taught by a series of supply teachers.

Children in Reception make satisfactory progress in lessons. In September this year, accurate assessments of children were made as they entered school. Children start school with levels of knowledge and understanding which are below expectations. The Reception teacher has begun to create booklets which show the progress made by children throughout the year. The teacher has identified weaknesses in pupils' short-term memories and has begun to develop these skills on a daily basis. However, the assessments made in May 2008, near the end of the Reception year, were not accurately recorded and do not give a clear picture of children's attainment. This means that it will be difficult to evaluate how much progress these children subsequently make in Key Stage 1.

Pupils' progress and standards in science are not tracked effectively. This means that the school does not have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding in this subject. Plans are in place to have a science tracking system in use this term.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school and especially in mathematics – *satisfactory*.

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour is good because staff guide pupils supportively yet firmly. This is a significant improvement since the last visit when behaviour was satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and staff are good because of the high priority given to their welfare. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles satisfactorily because the school encourages them to eat well and take regular exercise. They enjoy many school sporting activities and many say that they really enjoy mathematics lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic contributors in and outside school. Enterprise activities are helping pupils to develop their independence. For instance, Year 6 pupils learn about buying and selling because they manage a small school shop which sells stationery. Pupils say that they understand how to meet their learning targets when examples are given of what to include in their work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. Occasionally, opportunities to promote their spiritual awareness are missed. For example, in assemblies pupils are not regularly inspired to attain even more by sharing their successes in school work.

Quality of provision

The teaching seen during this monitoring inspection was satisfactory overall and sometimes good. An improvement is the use of clear learning objectives so that pupils know what they are expected to learn. The introduction of these has helped to sharpen teachers' planning and pupils' learning. Although teaching has improved since the section 5 inspection, it is still not as strong as the school would like, as set out in its targets for improvement. Good lesson criteria, such as to use the past and present tense in writing a story with a flashback, are generally presented to the pupils. Activities are generally matched appropriately to pupils' needs. There is often an additional challenge for the most able pupils in the lesson, although this is not always the case.

Assessment is not always used sufficiently on a daily basis to identify pupils who are underachieving and to give them the help they need to improve. Pupils are sometimes involved in assessing their own learning but too often at the end of a lesson opportunities are missed to get pupils to demonstrate what they have learned. Teaching assistants provide good support during practical activities but are not always productively involved in assessing pupils' learning in the introduction or the final part of lessons.

Lessons are generally brisk and pupils enjoy the challenges presented. Only on a few occasions do teachers spend too much time talking, which results in pupils losing focus and becoming restless. The use of the new interactive whiteboards is having a positive impact on the enjoyment and involvement of pupils.

The use of targets in English and mathematics is now becoming embedded in the work of the school and the pupils see this as a positive way of helping them to make better progress. They have both individual and group targets. Occasionally, some say that the targets are not easy to follow and they do not know what to do to achieve them. A few pupils are not always shown or reminded effectively how to provide the evidence that they have achieved the target.

Marking of pupils' work is supportive and encourages pupils, but it does not always state specifically what a pupil must do to improve. The beginnings of lessons are not regularly used to encourage pupils to follow up on teachers' written comments in their books. This means that pupils do not have a deep understanding of how to meet their learning targets.

Staff have received training about the new national framework for teaching mathematics. The teaching of mathematics seen throughout the school was satisfactory or better during the visit, although insufficient attention is sometimes paid to the presentation of pupils' work in their books. Pupils make errors because the setting out of their work is unclear and it is sometimes not easy to see where pupils have gone wrong because of this.

In order to make the pupils' learning more meaningful the staff are beginning to plan lessons around themes and topics. This is clearly sparking pupils' interests and imaginations and the theme week activities, such as 'Under the Sea' was seen as a great success by the pupils. While links are clearly made to literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) and work on the topics supports pupils' extended writing, links are not always made to the use of numeracy. This is particularly important as pupils struggle to reach expected standards in this subject.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school and particularly teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics – *satisfactory*.

Leadership and management

The school's leadership is using self-evaluation more rigorously. This is because the school is assessing children every half term and tracking their progress vigilantly. The tracking system focuses effectively on pupils' progress. In past years, performance management meetings with class teachers have not agreed what proportion of children will make expected or better progress each year. This means that each term the school's leadership cannot monitor the progress that each year group is making towards these agreed targets. The school's leadership does plan to do this in November and February when these meetings will occur between class teachers and the senior leadership team.

The monitoring of the quality of teaching is improving appropriately. The senior leaders focus satisfactorily on what pupils are learning, partly because a new observation form has been created. Observations of teaching do not always outline which skills teachers need to improve. Not all teachers are observed formally each term in two subjects. This is because the deputy headteacher only has one morning a week out of the classroom to monitor teaching and pupils' work.

The leadership of pupils with additional needs, literacy, mathematics and science are improving satisfactorily. For example, the literacy leader has created a sound action plan and she is recording targets met successfully. However, not all key subject leaders have analysed pupils' work or assessments to identify where the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are.

School improvement planning is good and outlines when and who will carry out the tasks and who will monitor the actions. The plan consistently sets achievable targets against which the school and governors can measure and celebrate success. This is a considerable improvement since the last visit.

The management of pupils' behaviour is effective. The school's leadership gathers weekly information about pupils who are behaving appropriately and those who are

misbehaving. The log is not fully analysed to identify patterns of behaviour or to improve behaviour further.

Governors are now more formally involved in monitoring the work of the school. They are using the latest information available to update different parts of the self-evaluation form each half term. Governors do not effectively analyse pupils' attainment and progress, especially mathematics. For example, governors do not know which year groups are the strongest academically or are making the least progress. Governors have formed committees and are establishing a more rigorous system to update school policies. Although the headteacher has completed safer recruitment training and safeguarding training this year, the child protection policy has not been reviewed recently and it does not explain fully how possible allegations about a member of staff at the school would be investigated.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the leadership and management so that leaders at all levels monitor standards and the quality of provision rigorously – *satisfactory*.

External support

Support from the LA is satisfactory. Senior leaders and governors reported favourably on the quality of support the school is receiving from the link adviser and the school improvement service. A core action group continues to meet each month to monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making. At these meetings the school is expected to provide evidence of the impact of the actions taken to bring about improvements. A strong emphasis is placed on evidence of outcomes. The use of drama activities to develop pupils' skills is increasing their understanding of how people feel in different situations. The use of ICT and interactive whiteboards are improving as a result of LA support and training. The deputy director of education has visited the school to evaluate teaching and learning. The LA has not fully supported the school's leadership in monitoring pupils' work or improving satisfactory teaching to good levels.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the role of the deputy headteacher to support the monitoring of teaching and pupils' work.
- Use assessment on a daily basis to identify and support pupils who are underachieving, particularly at the ends of lessons.
- Agree the proportion of pupils in each year group who will make expected or better progress, especially in science.
- Ensure pupils in Years 3 to 6 understand how to attain their learning targets more fully.