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4 November 2008

Mr S Crumpler
The Acting Headteacher
Shaftesbury Church of England Primary School
Wincombe Lane
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Dorset
SP7 8PZ

Dear Mr Crumpler

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

Following my visit with Denise Franklin, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 October 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 December 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. 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 second monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 October 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, senior staff and subject leaders, groups of pupils, a group of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the substantive headteacher has resigned. The governing body are currently seeking to appoint a permanent headteacher. An acting headteacher remains in place. There have been few other staffing changes, except that a new mathematics subject leader has been appointed.

Achievement and standards

The unvalidated results of national tests in Year 6 and teacher assessments for Year 2 have become available since the last monitoring inspection. They show standards by the end of Year 6 have risen from below average in 2007 to broadly average levels in 2008, at both the expected and above expected levels. From their starting points, the pupils made particularly good progress in English, mathematics and science. Improvements were also secured in Year 2. Standards at the levels expected for their age and at the higher levels have risen from below average to average levels in 2008. These results were secured due to improvements to teachers' planning and the tracking of progress individual pupils were making. The older pupils also received effective additional support, including targeted revision during last year.

However, the school recognises, through its own closer monitoring of pupils' achievement, that standards continued to dip below average, especially in Year 1 and Years 4 and 5. Rates of progress continue to vary across classes within year groups. The gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, which have built up over time, are still apparent because consistency in the quality of teaching and learning remains uneven and carefully targeted catch up work has not been in place for these older year groups. Consequently, a number of pupils capable of reaching the expected levels have underachieved. The school has identified these pupils and plans are in hand to commence intervention programmes shortly, but it is too soon to judge the impact of this support on their achievement. More able pupils make better progress in some classes than others because the extent to which their needs are met through the teaching varies. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress in some years and insufficient progress in others.

Standards in writing are beginning to improve, for example in Years 3 and 4 last year, as a consequence of a concerted focus on how to teach writing more systematically as a school. The rate of improvement is satisfactory, rather than good, primarily because more confident teaching in this area is hampered by an ineffective system for setting targets with pupils on how to improve their scripts. Despite a more concerted focus on teaching the subject and emphasis on enquiry work, standards in science remain stubbornly below average at the age expected and higher levels in Years 3 to 5 and progress rates are slow. The school is currently reviewing the accuracy of the teachers' assessments, as their accuracy in determining the academic levels of pupils' work is still an area for development.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continues to be good. Behaviour in class and around school is good. There is a good range of activities offered at lunch time and after school that the children enjoy. Pupils report that the teaching team are kind and encouraging and they respond by being polite to adults and each other. Pupils move around the school safely and sensibly and are calm and settled during lessons. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on important themes through song, prayer and discussion.

Quality of provision

The school continues to make satisfactory progress in developing teaching and learning. There are more instances of teachers using a range of strategies to engage pupils but the consistency across classes remains patchy. Although more good teaching was seen on this visit, one lesson was inadequate and the majority of teaching was satisfactory. Where good teaching was observed pupils were given time to clarify their thoughts and to test their reasoning in practical situations. Pupils were able to change their opinions based on their decisions. All teachers are making better use of the interactive whiteboards to provide a visual stimulus.

Planning is more detailed and identifies that tasks are suitably matched to meet the needs of the pupils. However, this is not always evident in practice. Pupils have a better understanding of how long they have to complete a task, which helps them stay focused on their learning. Marking of pupils' work remains inconsistent. Some staff are more successful than others in providing feedback to pupils and there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking for different subjects.

Teachers' planning in the foundation subjects is monitored to ensure that the content of the curriculum is covered according to an overall school plan. However, there has been no recent monitoring of learning by subject leaders. The extent

therefore to which the curriculum builds on prior attainment and experience is under developed. The ways in which key skills are developed through the curriculum are not in place.

Pupils' pastoral care remains a high priority in the school and is appreciated by pupils who feel safe and are confident that any issues or concern will be dealt with promptly. Good links with external agencies ensure pupils receive external support to which they are entitled. Effective strategies to support vulnerable pupils to integrate at playtimes have been introduced. All procedures for safeguarding children are in place and rigorously implemented.

The school is using its improved assessment procedures to set suitably challenging end of year targets for groups of pupils and to identify where pupils are underachieving. However, many of these have not yet been translated into curricular targets which the pupils understand. All pupils have individual or group targets and know where to find them in their books. However, not all pupils are clear about what they mean and how they help them learn. In many classes, marking does not provide pupils with consistent feedback on how well they are meeting their targets.

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is satisfactory. The intense support provided by the local authority has enabled teachers to create a more appropriate learning environment to support the EYFS curriculum. Children have settled well and relationships are good. They are beginning to know the routines, take turns and share. The outdoor area is developing into an extension of the classroom and children are beginning to make choices as to whether they want to be inside or outside. However, the objectives of some of the activities, both inside and outside, are not always fully focused on learning through play. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear action plan in place for developing and embedding the EYFS curriculum.

Progress on the areas identifies 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 established a clear direction for school improvement with leaders at all levels and governors. The culture within school is more open and teamwork is progressing well. Roles for senior and middle leaders have been redefined and these post holders are fully aware of their accountabilities. The school's internal capacity to improve has been strengthened as leaders on the senior team and subject coordinators have begun to take on their whole school responsibilities more actively and confidently in recent months. Improvements made

to systems for tracking the progress of each year group have enabled the school to establish a clear picture of current attainment and progress and to identify where pupils are falling behind. This enabled the school to identify under performance in Year 6 last year, take action, and bring about raised standards for that year group. The school's self-evaluation form has been updated and provides a useful synopsis of the key strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders have accurately audited the outcomes for learners and the quality of provision within their subjects and, to varying extents, are supporting colleagues in developing their teaching.

Processes for monitoring, improving and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are leading to satisfactory rather than good improvements to provision. Where initiatives have been agreed together, there have not been enough follow up checks and tailored support to individual teachers to ensure the teaching strategies are used well across the school.

A more rigorous schedule of monitoring has been devised and the governing body's role in helping to evaluate improvement gains has been strengthened. The governors have reorganised their working arrangements to ensure closer liaison with senior and subject leaders about progress on action plans. They are now asking pertinent questions as critical friends to the school's leaders.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

External support

The local authority has continued to provide extended support to class teachers, leaders at all levels, and to the governing body. This support has been a key factor in helping the school to move forward in terms of its effectiveness since the last inspection. The governors and middle leaders have appreciated the advice offered to them through LA appointed governors and consultants. The School Improvement Partner has retained close contact with the school and provided valuable aid in helping senior leaders develop their approaches to self-evaluation. Consultancy support to teachers on a one to one basis has had a less marked impact. In this important transition stage, the LA intends to keep its level of contact under continual review and reduce it as the full impact of recent initiatives become apparent.