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Mr N Harris
The Headteacher
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The Butts
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Devon
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Dear Mr Harris

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Colyton Primary School

Following my visit with Peter Kemble, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 March 2009, 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 November 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Laurie Lewin
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Colyton Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, talked with the local authority advisor by telephone, and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils drawn from across the school, the chair of governors and the chair of the governors' action planning committee.

Context

Since the last visit, the class for Years 3 and 4 pupils has been taught by a supply teacher, with the headteacher teaching groups of pupils from this class for booster work two or three times a week. In place of the headteacher's role here, the school has now appointed a temporary extra teacher to work alongside the supply teacher to boost the progress of pupils in this class further.

Achievement and standards

Since the last visit, the school has further strengthened systems to track the progress of pupils across the school. The data from this tracking shows improving standards and accelerated progress in most classes.

The Early Years Foundation Stage children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve well. This is evidenced by their work in lessons, the tracking information, and by the work in books and on wall displays around the classrooms. Led very effectively by the deputy headteacher, work in this part of the school continues to go from strength to strength. The effective emphasis that teachers place on oral and practical work is successively boosting pupils' knowledge and understanding and their ability to work independently. It is also providing them with a very solid platform for progressing confidently as they move through the school. Observations of, and discussions with, the Early Years Foundation Stage children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 show that they are developing good work habits and a confident ability to articulate their ideas.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do well and benefit greatly from working closely with the pupils in Years 1 and 2. In addition, the provision of a new spacious outdoor facility has significantly enhanced the work they do exploring and investigating through practical activities.

Pupils in Years 4 and 5 continue to make accelerated progress. Work is neatly and logically laid out in their books and shows good coverage of all of the areas tackled. Similarly, Year 6 pupils' work shows good presentation and coverage and, as at the last visit, their work reflects good progress. Pupils spoken to during the visit say that the intensive work in areas such as spelling has helped them a great deal in learning

to write more confidently and fluently. Work seen with the Year 6 pupils is now at a slightly above average level in English and mathematics. Pupils show good skills in their information and communication technology work.

The drive to improve standards in the class for Years 3 and 4 pupils remains a challenge for the school. The progress tracking information for these pupils shows that, for some of them up to the end of last term, their work had not improved and, for most, their level of achievement had declined. With improved teaching this term, there are clear signs that the school is beginning to grapple effectively with improving the progress and achievement of the pupils in this class.. Nonetheless, there remains much work to do to ensure that these pupils achieve the levels of which they are capable and to ensure that the increased progress shown so far this term is built upon and sustained. The effective work of the special educational needs coordinator and the intervention groups set up to boost work in Years 3 and 4, including the support clubs run by staff at lunchtime, all add strongly to the range of measures initiated to boost the progress of the pupils. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 say, 'The work is now more challenging and fun, more interesting and we get lots more practical activities than we did before.'

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise pupils' achievement and standards, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils throughout the school show good attitudes towards work and, in the main, are motivated to do their best. Increasingly, they offer their own ideas in class discussions and have a much better understanding about how well they are getting on with their work. They are fully aware of the increased expectations placed on them to work hard. As a result, the climate for learning is now usually good in lessons. Pupils continue to enjoy their work and the increased levels of challenge with which they are presented. They collaborate well with tasks and, for example, respond enthusiastically when teachers suggest discussing ideas with a partner.

Behaviour is good across the school. This is reflected in lessons, in the playground, and the calm atmosphere during lunch in the school hall. Pupils are becoming more involved with influencing life around the school. For example, pupils spoken to mentioned that the school council is becoming more effective with good initiatives such as running a small shop at lunchtime.

Whilst overall attitudes and behaviour are good, some of the pupils in Years 3 and 4 struggle to sustain their concentration and motivation during activities. Staff are working effectively to change this to ensure that all individuals maximise the opportunities to progress with their learning. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 spoken to during the last visit felt they could be doing better. They now say they are working harder and have to concentrate more on improving their work.

The school has made good strides to enhance links with the local community over recent terms and is now reinforcing this further, with firm plans in place to have regular visits to the local library and to make stronger links with the local history society. These links effectively develop pupils' understanding about how they can gain from, and contribute to, the local community

With the improvement in standards across the school further reinforced since the last visit, pupils now gain more competence with basic skills that will help them to achieve success in the future.

Pupils are generally good at taking care of themselves and looking after each other. The very good relationships between staff and pupils contribute strongly to the positive atmosphere evident throughout the school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the last visit, with no occurrences of unsatisfactory teaching and much good teaching observed. There is a very supportive team atmosphere around the school with staff providing effective support for each other and collaborating well where required. The teaching assistants work well with the teachers giving good quality support to individuals and groups.

Work to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been enhanced through better use of assessment information. The information is now used to identify individuals' needs and to inform the effective intervention programmes now set up. These programmes are beginning to lead to improvements in the work of pupils in the class for Year 3 and 4.

Teachers across the school have further strengthened the way in which they use the assessment information to identify pupils' needs, so that planning is now precise and well focused upon catering effectively for groups of pupils of differing ability. Target setting is now firmly embedded in all classes, with pupils across the school now much more involved in the process of setting targets and understanding how they are working to achieve these.

Most lessons are lively and interesting and engage pupils well. Questions are often used skilfully to probe understanding and extend thinking, and this demonstrates that teachers have confident subject knowledge. Explanations are usually clear and behaviour management is effective.

Curriculum development has understandably been geared towards improving pupils' work in English and mathematics. However, the school rightly recognises the need to make better use of all other subject areas to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills to a greater extent.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and support, improving particularly the way teachers engage pupils' interest and match learning to their individual needs – good
- use assessment of pupils' attainment and progress more effectively to raise the expectations of staff, set appropriately challenging targets and show pupils how to improve – good.

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to do a very good job in leading the school forward. He sets a working atmosphere in which all staff are keen to ensure provision improves as quickly as possible. Working closely with all staff and governors, he has ensured that clear school development plans and raising attainment plans are in place and fully implemented.

The senior leaders form a strong team and together, they have a very clear picture of what is working successfully and what still needs further improvement. Since the last visit, the senior leaders have continued to move the school forward robustly with a good range of initiatives to sustain the improvements in teaching and pupils' progress. Leaders monitor the impact of the initiatives on the rate of pupils' progress carefully. The last monitoring visit highlighted the need for the school to eradicate all occurrence of underachievement. Whilst much success has been achieved in most classes, there remains more to do to ensure that the pupils in Years 3 and 4 make up the legacy of lost progress. The school's leadership and management have done a great deal in this respect. Moves to boost the teaching over this current term have been successful, but there has not been enough time to see the full impact of this on pupils' learning.

Governors continue to work well in monitoring the progress and effectiveness of the school and have been proactive in supporting developments where needed, for example in enabling the school to boost teaching performance in Years 3 and 4.

Building work to provide an outdoor area for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has recently been completed. This spacious and well constructed area now significantly enhances the children's physical, practical and role play activities.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen leadership and management to make sure strategies introduced to improve provision and lift pupils' achievement are successful – good.

External support

The local authority continues to be highly effective part in supporting the school's recovery programme. Advisory staff visit the school regularly and the staff value the input that they make in helping them to refine systems, procedures and teaching programmes. For example, the advisory staff use the help clinics effectively so that

teachers can discuss current areas that they are focused upon improving. Similar effective support has been enabled through the school's close collaboration with an advanced skills teacher from another school. The advisory staff also work hard with staff to increase their skills, knowledge and confidence levels and have ensured that there is good continuity and progression in the work carried out across the school. Whilst the local authority carefully monitors the work of the school, it reports that it is now able to let the school take the lead in all areas of development planning and strategic implementation of new initiatives.

The local authority has played a key role in doing as much as possible to improve the situation for the Years 3 and 4 class and continues to provide strong support in this direction. Alongside the school staff, the local authority is fully aware of the importance of creating a situation where sustained improvement is realised in this part of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Maintain the focus on raising the achievement of pupils, with particular emphasis on those in Years 3 and 4.