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Mrs C Prynne
The Headteacher
Upton St James Church of England Primary School
St James Road
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Dear Mrs Prynne

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Upton St James Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on the 20 and 21 January 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the partners working to support the school, and the pupils for their time. I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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 Director of Education for the Diocese of Exeter, the chair of governors and the People's Commissioner and Director of Children's Services for Torbay.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield
HM Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Upton St James Church of England Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 January 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, subject coordinators, learning support assistants, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher of the National Support School and pupils from the school.

Context

The school currently has three temporary teachers.

Achievement and standards

First hand evidence shows that pupils in Years 1 to 4 have made satisfactory progress since the last visit. Based on the school's own comprehensive assessment information, an increasing proportion of pupils in these year groups are making good progress in writing and mathematics. The progress of pupils in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory. Slow progress over a number of previous years has resulted in below average standards in Year 6 particularly in mathematics. Whilst many of these pupils are still underachieving, it is clear that they are beginning to catch up in all subjects and that the school is monitoring their progress closely. Within this year group a high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. With local authority support, individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are reviewed regularly and include clear improvement targets. These actions, together with increasingly strong support from learning assistants, ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory or better progress.

The progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school has reacted positively to address previously identified concerns in children's early reading skills and consequently progress in reading is now good. Staff and learning support assistants now provide well organised and systematic teaching of reading. Pupils are now regularly applying these strategies across the school. This is having a clear impact on increasing the confidence with which pupils approach reading.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2007:

- accelerate the progress made in Years 3 to 6 to ensure that pupils do not underachieve – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils extend a friendly and warm welcome to visitors and staff. They enjoy a wide range of subjects and particularly appreciate the visits of a physical education teacher and the opportunities to use the school computers to research their geography and history work. They continue to make positive contributions around the school, hearing other pupils read and keeping a gentle eye out for younger pupils. The school council has helped to produce plans to improve playground equipment. Pupils' attitudes within lessons are more positive and the school atmosphere is notably calmer and more purposeful. A small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour are well supported and they comply with the school's behaviour systems. The school takes care to minimise disruption to others and the majority of pupils that were spoken to felt that behaviour around the school was improving. The school has put in place regular activity sessions which are helping to improve the confidence and self esteem of a number of pupils. Individual writing and mathematical targets give pupils a clearer grasp of the progress that they are making and the next steps to take to improve their work. Pupils spoke positively about the impact of marking and the way in which written and spoken comments further encourage them to focus and work hard.

Quality of provision

Staff continue to work together on the path to improvement and show a strong commitment to the pupils of the school. The quality of teaching has improved and the proportion of good teaching has increased. Teachers and staff form good relationships and are quick to offer praise and support which encourages pupils to respond positively. They encourage pupils speaking and listening skills through a regular use of talking partners. By clearly identifying specific weaknesses and providing timely support, the regular monitoring of teaching and learning has had an impact on raising standards. Where teaching is good, expectations are clearly communicated to pupils so that they know exactly what is required of them. The quality of marking has increased and gives pupils clear guidance on the next steps to take.

Planning of activities for different abilities is now more marked across the school and teachers are planning suitable activities for the varying abilities of pupils more frequently. The better teaching takes place when teaching plans are adjusted in the light of daily assessments of learning. In these lessons teachers have the confidence to set specific tasks that build on previous learning and which may occasionally deviate from their weekly planning. Teachers have adjusted the pace of their lessons and involve pupils more fully. They have adopted a number of effective strategies to ensure that pupils are more active participants in the lesson.

The school's satisfactory progress since the previous monitoring visit has been as a direct result of a more stable teaching staff. The capacity to make further progress is compromised by the temporary nature of several of the teaching posts.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop the quality of teaching so that there are no unsatisfactory lessons – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The school's system for monitoring the progress of all pupils is having a clear impact on their academic progress. Assessment information is used effectively to identify those pupils that need additional support in specific subjects. Learning support staff are deployed well to support these pupils. The information is used further as a focus in discussions with class teachers about the individual progress of pupils and to decide on appropriate actions to take.

The school's monitoring procedures are more thorough and are helping to raise standards of teaching. Subject leaders are more involved in monitoring their curriculum areas and have adopted a more proactive approach to leading improvements in their subjects. The English coordinator has worked, together with staff from the National Support School (NSS), to develop a consistent approach to teaching reading. She has planned staff training sessions aimed at improving pupils reading comprehension skills. The mathematics coordinator has analysed pupil progress data and, through training and the support of the NSS, has developed a clearer understanding of her role in the monitoring of teaching.

Governors are clear in their roles and responsibilities and are providing satisfactory support for the headteacher and school. A separate governor committee meets regularly to monitor the school's progress. Through the support of a national leader of education headteacher, this committee has a greater understanding of the use of data to support and monitor the work of the school.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the ways pupils' performance is assessed and recorded and make effective use of such information – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of subject coordinators and governors – satisfactory.

External support

The school continues to benefit from a range of external support. Clear channels of communication exist between all key parties and these are used effectively to refine improvement strategies and to set a clear direction. Staff and governors continue to gain in subject knowledge, confidence and expertise through the strong support provided by the local authority and the NSS in the areas of data handling, learning support, special needs, the early years, mathematics and English subject development.

Priorities for further improvement

- Where possible establish permanent members of staff to help sustain and build upon the current rate of improvement.