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13 February 2009

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

Dear Mrs Jones

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Clehonger CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Patricia Potheary, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 February 2009, 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 be appointed only after consultation with HMI.

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 Hereford, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Herefordshire.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Clehonger CofE Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 February 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the science coordinator, the special educational needs coordinator, the chair and vice chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection one teacher has left the school and two have begun maternity leave. Four new teachers have joined the school, two of whom are working in a job share arrangement.

Achievement and standards

In Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils are working in line with national expectations, and the pupils in these classes are making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. This is also the case for an increasing proportion of pupils in Years 3 and 4. In Years 5 and 6 standards remain below average and pupils' progress in these year groups is still too patchy. However, in the lessons observed during the inspection pupils' progress was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties in all year groups has accelerated significantly. Several of these pupils have made notable strides, particularly in their writing, as a result of the much improved support and teaching they are receiving.

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

Behaviour during the visit was good overall. In some lessons it was excellent. Pupils cooperated very well together during playtime to build a series of impressive snowmen, which they thoroughly enjoyed. Very occasionally pupils lacked concentration in lessons or distracted each other with inappropriate comments. Pupils are benefiting from the improved teaching. They are engaging well with the new opportunities they are given, and their enjoyment is evident. Attendance is satisfactory overall. The school is well aware of any individual issues and is taking appropriately robust action to challenge the few incidents of low attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching has improved since the previous visit. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory. An increased number were good and all included at least some good

elements. Relationships between staff and pupils are consistently positive. Pupils are enjoying the more creative approaches teachers are using. A strength of the lessons observed was the wide range of activities used to capture pupils' imagination and motivate them to learn. Teachers' improved knowledge and understanding of assessment have led to better planning and lessons are more appropriately paced. However, the school is aware that, overall, lessons still need to be more sharply focused on the exact steps each individual or group of pupils needs to take next in order to improve their learning. Occasionally, teachers' understandable concern to address the gaps in some pupils' learning lowers their expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Teachers, especially those who are more established at the school, are now confidently able to assess the levels at which pupils are working. The headteacher has incorporated this information into a robust tracking system which has enabled senior leaders to gain a clear overview of the areas in which pupils are making the most and the least progress. Crucially, the school has embarked on the next step of analysing in more detail the exact aspects of pupils' learning which need further improvement and is implementing actions to address this. For example, working alongside teachers, senior leaders have accurately identified that the writing skills of Year 5 and 6 pupils are an urgent priority for improvement. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of their own targets and this limits the extent to which they can take responsibility for their own learning.

Assessment in the Reception class has improved. Assessment is more frequent and of a better quality, giving a much clearer picture of what each child can do and needs to learn next. This is assisting planning. The inclusion of more activities which are initiated by the children is positive and, importantly, has allowed staff to learn more about children's language skills and their creativity.

The use of phonics strategies to assist pupils' reading and writing are now well established in Reception and Year 1 but are at an early stage of development in the rest of the school. The time given to the structured teaching of phonics is sometimes too short which inhibits the extent to which teachers can group pupils and tailor the lesson to suit their needs.

Improvements in science have taken place in line with the school's development plan. The science coordinator has taken a number of appropriate actions, particularly to improve assessment. As a result, planning for the teaching of science is increasingly precise and well focused. A useful audit of staff's skills has been used well to tailor training to their needs. The school's own evaluation shows improvements in science lessons as a result of these developments.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties, as well as for those who need some additional support to improve certain skills, is much improved. Provision is well tailored to meet individual needs, and staff are being given a range of appropriate training and support to continue to improve their skills. Importantly, the special educational needs coordinator is involved in working with the headteacher to analyse

the assessment and tracking information for the pupils with learning difficulties, and the school's aspirations for these pupils is suitably high. For those pupils who have been the focus of improved intervention and support, positive progress is evident.

Overall, the improved assessment information, the training and support given to staff and the improved special educational needs information and organisation are all poised to have a significant impact on the progress pupils are making.

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, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has maintained her clear and steady focus on improving all aspects of the school's work. Since the previous monitoring visit she has accurately analysed the next steps the school needs to take and has effectively led the required improvements. Staff are working hard to secure these improvements and are using their strengths effectively to support each other. The headteacher has managed the staffing changes very well which has ensured a smooth transition for pupils. As a result, all classes are settled and there has been no disruption to learning. New staff have already built good relationships with the pupils. Importantly, the headteacher has ensured that all new staff understand the school's expectations for all aspects of their work and is already giving these staff the appropriate support and training to meet them. The school's capacity to improve has strengthened since the previous visit. Improvement is now being driven more confidently by the school's leaders and is less reliant on support from the local authority.

Governors continue to take a robust and rigorous approach to their role and are effectively providing challenge and support to the school.

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 – good.

External support

Support from the local authority is satisfactory overall. The support given by the contact adviser is good and is much appreciated by the school. Since the previous visit he has successfully taken on the role of coordinating all of the local authority's support for the school and ensuring that it is well matched to the school's needs. The school has benefited from the well focused and practical support for science both from a specialist teacher from the cluster and from the local authority contact inspector. The support to improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties

has been effective in ensuring that this is now better managed, and in helping the special educational needs coordinator to develop her role well. The local authority's evaluation of the effectiveness of its own support is improving.

Priorities for further improvement

- Implement the planned strategies to improve writing in Years 5 and 6.
- Review the use of time for the teaching of phonics, and its organisation; develop greater consistency in the use of phonics strategies in Key Stage 2.
- Develop ways to communicate pupils' targets more clearly to them.
- Ensure that new staff are supported to use all of the school's systems and strategies.