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13 May 2009

Mrs C Prynne  
The Headteacher  
Upton St James CofE Primary School  
St James Road  
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Devon  
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Dear Mrs Prynne

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Upton St James CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 April 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 – 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 chair of governors, the Director of Children's Services for Torbay and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Exeter.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Upton St James CofE Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 April 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

The school continues to employ three temporary teachers. It has advertised and drawn up a short list of applicants for a permanent teaching post to commence in September 2009.

## Achievement and standards

The school's pupil tracking systems indicate that writing skills have increased at a good rate since the last monitoring visit. The majority of pupils across Years 3 to 6 are making satisfactory or better progress in writing. Regular analysis of English and mathematics assessment data has ensured that teachers are clear about the expected rates of progress and this has led to a greater understanding of the next steps that pupils need to take to improve their work.

Teachers regularly follow up pupils' mathematical misunderstandings and set aside time to reinforce specific skills and concepts. Half-termly assessments are used to check pupils' learning and to ensure that pupils are able to apply these skills confidently. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics has increased and is now good.

Children in the Reception class show a secure understanding of phonics and apply this knowledge well in their emerging writing skills. They approach reading with confidence and with obvious enjoyment. Their creative development is less advanced than other areas of learning, as is their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Progress in science is satisfactory. Whilst the school has put in place appropriate actions to improve pupils' experimental and investigative skills, the impact of these actions is not evident. Lesson observations show that standards in physical education and art are satisfactory. Standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory overall with pupils' understanding of data handling and control the weaker aspects.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour is consistently good across the school and continues to improve. Pupils provide a warm and cheerful welcome to visitors and their obvious enjoyment and pride in their school are far more evident than previously. Pupils are attentive in lessons and apply themselves well to their tasks. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in all classes. Pupils show an increased engagement in school life. A thoughtful comment from a pupil that 'I try my hardest for the school to show how much the school is helping us' represents the attitudes of many. Pupils have increasing opportunities to express their views about the school and how it may continue to improve. Pupils know that all adults are approachable and that they will listen and show understanding. This helps pupils to feel valued and confident in their own safety. The positive role models provided by staff are mirrored in the attitudes shown by pupils who make positive contributions in many ways. Several older pupils act responsibly as play leaders at lunchtime and play carefully with others.

## Quality of provision

Teaching across the school is more focused on pupils' learning and is developing some clear strengths. Teachers and support staff have formed good relationships with pupils and this ensures that behaviour is good and that pupils are attentive and keen to work. Distractions are very few and handled quickly and confidently by staff in a consistent approach.

Pupils are regularly given opportunities to share their ideas and to discuss their answers during lessons. These discussions are used appropriately and staff ensure that pupils are also given suitable opportunities to work on their own and apply their knowledge. Teachers consistently use questions to help to motivate pupils and to help them increase their understanding. They have developed strategies to ensure that all pupils participate in question and answer sessions. This has helped staff to quickly identify those pupils who need additional explanation as well as those who require additional and more complex tasks.

Lesson planning regularly identifies different activities for pupils of differing abilities. As at the time of the last monitoring visit, where this planning clearly identifies the intended learning, pupils make good progress. Precise learning intentions are more evident in English and mathematics but are not consistently apparent in other subjects. Furthermore, marking of pupils' work does not consistently refer to these intentions.

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 in English and mathematics is good and is now an integral part of school life. Procedures are clearly understood and planned well in advance and are accurately described by a class teacher as occurring regularly in a 'natural cycle'. These rigorous systems ensure a swifter identification and response to any lapses in progress and are having an impact on increasing the rates of progress in these two subject areas. Teaching assistants are well deployed and, through training and good communication, now clearly understand their role and purpose. The school has made a significant investment in staff training and development and uses staff meetings effectively to maintain improvements in provision and outcomes.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are continuously reviewing and assessing the impact of their actions. Subject leaders have prepared appropriate and realistic action plans with a strong focus on increasing pupils' progress and raising standards. Clear monitoring procedures ensure that governors and subject leaders are involved in reviewing and amending these action plans during the year. Governors are clear about the emerging strengths of the school and are well placed to consider the financial implications of future staffing levels and deployment.

More purposeful monitoring by English and mathematics subject leaders is having a clear impact on raising standards in writing and mathematics. The school is now intent on encouraging other subject leaders to develop their roles and responsibilities.

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 – good
- improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of subject coordinators and governors – satisfactory.

## External support

The local authority representative and the headteacher from the National Support School continue to provide effective support for improvement carefully matched to the particular needs of the school. They are correctly looking to work in close collaboration with the school to plan and manage a phased exit strategy. Staff from the National Support School have made strong contributions to building the leadership skills of the school's English and mathematics subject leaders. The special educational needs coordinator from the National Support School has supported teaching assistant training and with a local authority consultant has helped to plan a comprehensive programme of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.