

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr T Collins  
The Headteacher  
St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Burton Latimer  
High Street  
Burton Latimer  
Kettering  
Northamptonshire  
NN15 5RL

Dear Mr Collins

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Burton Latimer

Following my visit with Martin James and Gail Robertson to your school on 16 and 17 June 2009, 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 July 2008. 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 visit – good.

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 the Children and Young People's Service for Northamptonshire and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

A P O'Malley  
H M Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Burton Latimer

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 June 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, two groups of pupils, the chair of governors, the vice chair of governors and two representatives from the local authority.

## Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the school roll has fallen from 235 to 208 pupils. Staffing is now much more settled than it was during the term following the school being placed in special measures. However, one teacher has been on long-term absence. One long-term supply teacher and a Key Stage 2 part-time mathematics teacher have left the school. The school has employed numerous supply teachers to cover the classes affected.

## Achievement and standards

Assessments made to monitor pupils' standards are now accurate. Teachers have had training in matching pupils' work to National Curriculum levels and they are now more skilled in identifying the levels that pupils are achieving. This important improvement enables senior leaders to measure the progress pupils are making and report with confidence on their current standards.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start school with skills expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. The assessments made recently show that by the end of the Reception Year the majority reach the expected learning outcomes. Children's strongest areas are problem solving, numeracy and reasoning. Personal, social and emotional development is a relative weakness. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 show that, although pupils' standards are broadly average, the proportions of pupils reaching the highest level in writing and in mathematics are significantly below the national averages. However, even in these areas the progress pupils have made since the previous visit is good. For example, there has been a threefold increase in the proportion of pupils demonstrating the expected writing skills. The early signs of improving outcomes in Key Stage 2 identified in the previous report are now more evident. Work in pupils' books and standards observed in lessons confirm the school's evaluation that pupils are now making better progress in writing. Standards in mathematics and science are now closer to the national average because the rates of pupils' progress have improved.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve pupils' achievement in writing throughout the school and in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 – good.

### Quality of provision

On the previous visit, a third of lessons were inadequate. Now all teaching is at least satisfactory, and a third of the 18 lessons observed were good. This is a significant improvement. However, there is not yet enough good teaching to ensure that pupils are progressing as well as they are capable.

Teachers use the improved data about pupils' progress to plan lessons better suited to the needs of the different ages and abilities in their classes. For example, in a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class, a sequence of lessons on handling data took into account the earlier learning of higher and lower attaining pupils in both year groups. This meant that the youngest children were able to increase their understanding of sorting through practical activities, whilst the oldest and most able pupils were able to record their work in Venn and Carroll diagrams before moving on to challenging extension activities. All groups made good progress.

Consistent strengths throughout the school are relationships with pupils, the support provided by teaching assistants, and, the sharing of learning objectives at the beginning of lessons to ensure pupils understand the purpose of their activities. At the time of the previous visit, learning in science was inadequate. Work observed in lessons and in books show that this is now improving. For example, in a lesson seen in Year 5, pupils investigated insulators and conductors. They worked well collaboratively, made thoughtful predictions and used a range of resources skilfully. The highest attainers initiated their own enquiry to investigate if all metals are conductors. Lessons generally move along at a brisk pace. However, at times introductions to lessons are too long and this slows the pace of the learning as some pupils lose concentration. Teachers make appropriate use of questioning, but too often focus on obtaining a correct answer and then moving on to the next question. When this happens, pupils do not have opportunities to explain their reasoning or, more crucially, receive help to deal with any misconceptions. The tendency in a minority of classes for more able pupils to shout out answers also disadvantages pupils who require time to think about the question asked.

Support from an outstanding school and local authority advisers has helped the school improve its provision. The curriculum now promotes more active and independent learning for pupils. In mathematics and science lessons, pupils enjoy the practical tasks that allow them to work collaboratively on investigations. Teachers, under the direction of the deputy headteacher, more consistently look for ways to make learning interesting and more meaningful for the pupils. One pupil reported, 'I found the Romans so interesting I did a lot of work at home as well.' Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum and there is now an overview of what is to be taught and when. Teachers are taking the necessary steps to make sure that there are helpful links across subjects. For example, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils were

able to apply handling data skills developed in mathematics lessons when recording their science activities. This task also made good use of their class visit to the seaside. The art and design and technology work on display is of a good standard giving the pupils high self-esteem and sense of worth. Design and technology for the older pupils promotes independent learning well because they have opportunities to develop and realise their ideas at home as well as in class. There is an effective programme of personal, social and moral education which starts in the Reception Year. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, identify emotions, resolve conflict and become responsible. Pupils reported that they enjoy their lessons but miss the reduced time for some aspects of physical education when they go swimming and take part in the 'Shake and Awake' times.

The guidance that pupils receive about their work has improved significantly since the last monitoring visit. Pupils have targets for improving their work in English and mathematics, and these are evident in classrooms and in pupils' books. Discussions with pupils show that, in most cases, they know their targets well, and they are pleased to talk about what they need to do next in their work. Teachers provide detailed comments when marking pupils' books, and the consistent use of 'two stars and a wish' not only gives pupils praise for their work, but also provides them with further advice on how to make their work even better. Pupils, for their part, are keen to follow the advice provided, and most are proud of the work they are now producing.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching so that pupils' work matches their needs accurately and expectations of all pupils are higher, particularly for the more able – good
- develop the curriculum so that it stimulates more active and independent learning challenges all pupils more – good
- make sure pupils have the guidance they need to improve their work – good.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leadership team have benefited from external support that has helped them focus on key priorities and accelerate the pace of change. Particularly important has been the introduction of rigorous strategies for measuring accurately pupils' standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science each half term. This has enabled senior leaders to have a much sharper understanding of how effectively teaching is raising achievement and to identify strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are now accountable for the progress of pupils. Monitoring procedures include regular lesson observations, moderation of teachers' assessments, and regular one-to-one reviews with staff. The inspection evidence shows that these strategies have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and are accelerating progress. This is because when the headteacher conducts lesson observations and book trawls there is now a clear focus on how well pupils are learning. His judgements of the quality of teaching are accurate. When observations identify areas for development, teachers receive support and senior leaders monitor the impact of the support.

The subject leaders in English, mathematics and science are now beginning to contribute appropriately to the school's efforts to drive up standards. With help from colleagues working in a high performing school and learning advisers from the local authority, subject leaders are implementing helpful action plans to improve the quality of learning in their own subjects. The school recognises that the subject leaders' roles require further development, but the lead they are already giving is contributing to the drive to improve pupil outcomes.

A recent parent survey shows increasing confidence in the ability of the school's leadership and management to secure a good quality of education for their children. Conversations with parents during the inspection confirm this view. Although some are understandably concerned about the high number of different teachers their children have had since the previous inspection, the majority that inspectors spoke to felt that there had been improvements at the school in recent months.

The governing body are playing an important part in driving the school's improvement. It has implemented a suitable programme of activities, including focused visits to school, to monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making. The subject action groups enable them to evaluate alongside subject leaders the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement. Governors are very enthusiastic about the role they have supporting the school on its journey out of special measures.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management so that every teacher is held to account regarding pupils' progress and that leaders at all levels drive school improvement more urgently – good.

### External support

The local authority has provided good support to the school. The support for subject leaders and teachers from learning advisers has been crucial in improving achievement and standards. The local authority has also funded a very effective partnership, brokered by the diocese, between St Mary's and an outstanding Church of England school. This partnership is improving the quality of leadership and management in the school. Additional support provided by a leadership coach has helped the headteacher to prioritise tasks and manage time efficiently.