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24 November 2009

Mrs S Jones
The Headteacher
Nyewood CofE Junior School
Brent Road
Bognor Regis
West Sussex
PO21 5NW

Dear Mrs Jones

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Nyewood CofE Junior School

Following my visit with Peter Dacombe and Chris Grove, additional inspectors, to your school on 10 and 11 November 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 October 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Overall progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.
Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to rigorous mentoring by senior staff members.

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 West Sussex and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Michael Burghart
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Nyewood CofE Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 November 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' books, and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors. They also spoke with representatives from the local authority and diocese.

Context

There have been considerable changes since the last monitoring inspection. There is no longer an operational headteacher. The strategic headteacher is now fulfilling the role of headteacher/consultant headteacher, seconded full time from the Local Authority on a one year contract whilst governors seek to make a permanent appointment. Five new teachers have been appointed including the deputy headteacher to fill vacancies, including one arising from the mutually agreed departure of a member of staff and another to cover maternity leave. During the visit one teacher, who is about to take maternity leave, was absent and her class was taught by a supply teacher new to the school. Local authority consultants for teaching and learning still support the school but have been able to reduce their involvement as staff become more proficient. Since July communal areas of the school corridors and some office space have been redecorated and some classroom and office furniture has been replaced. Changes to office accommodation have provided the headteacher and senior leaders with a dedicated meeting space. There has been a substantial reorganisation of classroom storage and all teachers have changed rooms. A review of the timetable has successfully addressed the previous shortfall in taught time. A new, as yet unused, kitchen has been built in the school courtyard and the outside environment has been upgraded with new basketball stands, an adventure trail and a large climbing web. The school is now organised in ten classes all mixed age – five with Years 3 and 4 and five with Years 5 and 6.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

In the last visit it was already appreciated that standards in 2009 Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics were even lower than in 2008. These have since been validated. Low results confirm that the changes now in hand were much needed. There are very early signs that the raft of new initiatives and much more rigorous planning and assessment are beginning to make a difference. This is most obviously the case in writing where, although still below average, work in pupils' books is much nearer age-related expectations. Years 3 and 4 descriptions of life in the rainforests and very sensitive poems ghosted as Spitfire pilots by pupils in Years 5 and 6 are good examples of marked improvement. Nevertheless attainment, particularly in mathematics which has been less the focus of the school's efforts, remains below average across the school. Nearly all lessons observed and the



school's own tracking records confirm a notable improvement in pupils' progress, which is now more usually satisfactory than not. However, as a result of gaps in previous learning caused by weaknesses in teaching in this school, pupils continue to underachieve relative to their ability and their broadly average starting points on entry to Year 3. Teachers, particularly in Years 5 and 6, frequently have to pitch their teaching at levels below those normally expected to help pupils catch up. Until recently when more effective assessment provided the school with an appropriate picture of where underachievement lay, it was thought that the reason for the school's low profile of attainment was almost entirely due to potentially more able pupils failing to reach above average levels. Notwithstanding that this is still a central feature, it is now clear that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not make sufficient progress. Opportunities are missed to include National Curriculum levels and P scales in pupils' individual education plans alongside the personal targets already set. This reduces the effectiveness of these plans in supporting staff and pupils' understanding of how effective extra support is in terms of progress compared with all pupils. Pupils in the middle ability range have also underachieved. Addressing this, when some pupils are more than two years behind where they should be, is a tall order and it is too soon to prove the full impact of the changes made to provision, but there are clear indications of improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and achievement especially in writing and mathematics by ensuring that lessons are planned to provide activities that match precisely the needs of pupils of all ability levels – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' personal development was not a main focus for the inspection visit. However, from time spent in lessons and observations around the school, it is possible to report that behaviour continues to improve and is generally good. That there is little low level disruption in lessons is a credit to teachers' better planning and the increased pace of learning, with work set more appropriately for different ability levels. Positive features previously noted in terms of relationships and attitudes have been built upon. Pupils feel safe and much appreciate the improvements made to the way staff mark and display their work. They have been keen to take on board the opportunity to be involved in evaluating their own performance and clearly enjoy the new approach to topic work. An excellent example of strengths in spiritual, moral social and cultural development was in the Remembrance Day assembly. It was a moving, awe-inspiring experience with the two minutes silence perfectly observed.

The effectiveness of provision

The improvements to the working environment and changes made to the way classes are organised are paying dividends. This is particularly in terms of time saved and disruption avoided now that pupils no longer move around from class to class.

There are tangible improvements to behaviour and pupils' concentration. These, coupled with the development of assessment techniques which draw pupils into evaluating their own progress, are having a positive impact on the quality of learning. The new organisation of classes means that pupils are taught almost entirely by the same teacher, and this has improved accountability, with staff having a much better awareness of what pupils have covered before and the level they have reached. Strengths in how staff manage the physical and pastoral care of pupils have been maintained. Teaching assistants and office staff make a significant contribution to such care and to the school's overall ethos. Statutory requirements are met with regard to safeguarding of pupils.

Despite some lack of understanding on the part of some staff of how data on pupils' performance is to be usefully interpreted, assessment is beginning to be used more effectively to inform planning and work is consistently set for different ability levels. This process is well led by key staff. Work is effectively marked with the policy and system introduced last term proving successful. Planning of lessons and pupils' work is of a higher quality than at the time of the last visit. This provides support for all staff and has helped overcome the lack of pupils' equal opportunities evident last year. Now pupils of the same age in different classes have the same entitlement and have their work assessed in the same way. Staff work well together to adapt, extend and match the basic two-year rolling programme to pupils' needs and to present work in ways that are both interesting and enjoyable. There is a greater emphasis on using learning objectives to make clear the point of lessons and to gauge progress during them. Pupils now have targets for literacy and numeracy as well as working towards class and school targets. The success of this system is variable class to class, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching.

Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons observed in Years 5 and 6 with some good and a few outstanding features. For example, a cracking pace, high expectations and well-defined levels of challenge were evident in mathematics lessons identifying strategies for division, as well as in history lessons examining Anne Frank's life in hiding. Perceptive questioning extended pupils' understanding. A small minority of lessons observed in Years 3 and 4 had inadequate features with insufficient challenge, occasional problems with class management which had negative effects on behaviour, and a slow pace of learning. However, although this still leaves the school short of reaching the first target for improvement detailed below, sound progress is being made towards it. There is shared commitment to improving the quality of teaching that was not present last year and this bodes well. School monitoring records show that once weaknesses in teaching are identified staff are prepared to address them. No one now is, as reported at the last visit, 'in denial' regarding the appropriateness of the special measures judgement.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory by ensuring that: all pupils have equal access to the same opportunities to enjoy and extend their

learning; all teachers consistently make use of pupils' targets and mark work to show how improvements can be made; and lessons move with suitable pace – satisfactory

- develop rigorous systems to track and analyse pupils' progress to provide information that precisely informs teachers' planning and target setting – satisfactory
- improve the curriculum by providing more interesting and exciting activities to boost pupils' enjoyment, motivation and interest in learning – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders, governors and managers at all levels are very much aware of the extent of the journey the school is on. They appreciate that overcoming underachievement and raising standards are crucial to the school eventually coming out of special measures. They have shown resilience and initiative in addressing weaknesses and have developed a team ethic which was not present last year. There is a shared ambition for the school and a determination which has benefited from the appointment of new teachers and the experience of key staff already in post. Since the last visit the roles of deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, senior and middle managers have been clarified with attention to what is expected and how staff are to be accountable. A rigorous programme of monitoring of teaching has been introduced with headteacher and deputy headteachers regularly observing lessons and scrutinising pupils' learning. Constructive feedback has led to significant improvements in performance.

The positive impact of changes already noted in this report to the organisation of the learning environment, provision for equal opportunities, better time management and improved standards of behaviour are all the result of good leadership and management. With the unknowns of three new teachers for January (two of which are yet to be appointed) and the unresolved permanent headship, there are still some important question marks about the school's future development. However, Nyewood is in a much better position than it was at the time of last monitoring visit. Its self-evaluation systems now involve senior leaders and governors and the year team structure ensures that all staff are consulted and have the opportunity to contribute to strategic planning. Nevertheless, opportunities are missed to make the most of existing good practice and build on strengths because not all teachers are routinely observing each other's lessons. Currently three teachers observe one another as part of a coaching plan but this has not yet spread across the school.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop more effective monitoring and self-evaluation systems so that the school can more exactly pinpoint what needs to be done to improve provision – good
- improve the quality of leadership, management and governance of the school by articulating a clear vision to help staff take ownership for improvement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to give the school good support. This ranges from additional funding (for example contributing towards the cost of a temporary headteacher/consultant and a non class-based deputy headteacher), to expert advice over curriculum planning and personnel issues.

Priorities for further improvement

No further areas for development were raised by the inspection team. The key to the school's future success is rooted in driving up pupils' achievement and attainment and this is already explicit in the ongoing issues for improvement.