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20 November 2009

Mrs C Davies
Headteacher
St Matthias Church of England Primary School
Cromwell Road
Malvern Link
Worcestershire
WR14 1NA

Dear Mrs Davies

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Declan McCauley, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 November 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2009. 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.

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 Diocesan Director of Education for Worcestershire and the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Matthias Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 November 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the chair of governors, individual and groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. They also met with parents in the playground.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in July 2009, a new teacher has joined the school. Another member of staff has reduced their teaching commitment and will leave the school at the end of the autumn term.

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

In the lessons observed, pupils do not always make enough progress. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good progress but, across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils' progress is inadequate overall. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is significantly lower than average in reading and mathematics and lower than average in writing. Similarly, at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is also lower than average with only about half the cohort achieving the level expected in mathematics and two-thirds reaching the level expected in English and science. Girls generally do better than boys, particularly in English and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not attain as highly as similar pupils nationally. Far fewer pupils than average achieve the higher levels.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The vast majority are attentive in lessons and want to do well. They display positive attitudes and are keen to learn. They engage willingly in conversation and are happy to discuss their work. On occasions, teachers do not make their expectations of behaviour clear enough and some pupils do not listen carefully enough to instructions. Pupils play well together in the playground and relationships are good across the school.

The school's procedures for encouraging pupils to achieve good levels of punctuality and attendance are having a good effect. The school is working hard at improving communication links with parents. For example, the weekly newsletters, with regular updates on attendance, and the termly briefings, informing families about topics being taught in each class, are having a positive impact. The invitation to families to

bring their child to pupil progress meetings is proving a successful initiative for staff to, when necessary, discuss punctuality and attendance issues. The change, brought in at the start of the autumn term, for Key Stage 2 pupils to enter classrooms on arrival each morning has been particularly successful in ensuring a smooth start to the day. The education welfare officer is working closely with the school to reduce absenteeism levels and, during the inspection, led a successful assembly that captured pupils' attention well. As a result of these initiatives attendance levels are currently satisfactory having risen to 94.6% for the first part of the autumn term.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- improve communication with parents in order to reverse the decline in attendance – good.

The effectiveness of provision

In the lessons observed the quality of teaching varies between good and inadequate. It has improved since the last visit and there are more satisfactory and fewer inadequate lessons than previously. This is because lesson planning has improved following the introduction of a common planning format. Most teachers are making appropriate use of it to identify what pupils will learn in each lesson and to plan appropriate activities. Work is, more often than not, being matched more precisely to pupils' differing abilities, enabling most pupils to engage with learning. In general, teachers are ensuring that lessons move at a suitable pace and maintain pupils' interest. There is a better balance between teacher input and time for practical work activities. Teaching assistants are supporting well in lessons, often working with a particular group of pupils. In some lessons they undertake assessment activities to monitor pupils' development, but this approach is not embedded throughout the school. Teachers are making increasingly effective use of information and communication technology, particularly visualisers, which enable teachers to display visual images onto the whiteboard. Some of the best use involves displaying examples of pupils' work and engaging them in discussing particular points. This strategy helps them gain a better understanding of how their work can be improved.

Despite the recent improvements in the quality of some lessons the quality of pupils' work remains poor. Teachers do not make their expectations about the quality or quantity of work expected, explicit enough. As a result, the presentation of work in many books is not high enough and, as a consequence, too many pupils make careless mistakes. There are numerous gaps in many pupils' knowledge and understanding, which slow the rate of progress they achieve. The introduction of target cards is proving to be a useful strategy for teachers to support pupils' individual needs. The quality of marking is improving with teachers beginning to identify and explain how pupils can improve the quality of their work. More attention is still needed to diagnose, with greater precision, each pupil's stage of development and identify the steps needed to improve. The recent introduction of new

assessment procedures is helping in this regard but teachers need to increase their familiarity and confidence with making accurate judgements.

The increased focus on setting challenging targets is raising teachers' awareness of how much progress pupils need to achieve each year, if they are to reach or exceed the expected levels. As a result of its increasingly accurate assessment data, the school is refining the precision with which it sets future targets for pupils' achievement.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- set more challenging targets for pupils' progress and ensure these are used by all teachers to plan work that is suitably demanding for individual pupils and provide appropriate guidance to pupils on how their work can be improved - satisfactory
- ensure pupils make more progress in lessons by ensuring that pupils spend less time listening and more time actively engaged – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership team is growing in confidence. Working with the governing body they have engendered a sense of purpose and direction that is entirely appropriate. The headteacher's leadership has been particularly effective in bringing these changes about. Staff and parents respect what has been achieved in a relatively short amount of time. The school's improvement plan is well conceived and provides a useful structure to the school's future development. The current focus on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is proving effective in bringing about improvement in the quality of lessons. The quality of feedback provided to members of staff is detailed and comprehensive. It provides useful information about the effectiveness of different aspects of the teaching observed but does not focus explicitly on how the teaching has impacted on the progress achieved by individual or groups of pupils.

The governing body is increasing its level of engagement with the school. The chair of governors is giving a strong lead and taking the initiative to ensure that the governing body is working effectively and providing the level of support needed. The creation of different committees with specific responsibilities, and the allocation of roles to individual governors, shows their determination to help the school improve. For example, to ensure that they are satisfied with the security of the site and pupils' safety, they have decided to allocate a governor to oversee and work with the school as it enters a programme of building alterations. This allocation of responsibilities strengthens the school's satisfactory safeguarding procedures. They are also working closely with the headteacher and receive detailed reports on the progress currently being achieved. This flow of information is proving influential in enabling the governors to play their role fully in holding the school to account. As a consequence, they are keen to do more and are looking at how they can finally make a decision,

with the local authority, about the responsibility for the school's afternoon Nursery provision.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress more rigorously; and draw up and implement plans to improve the areas of weakness – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority is continuing to provide good support to the school. The school's improvement partner has been influential in ensuring that the school receives the expertise needed to help it develop the capacity needed for improvement. The evidence to demonstrate the impact of this support, although evident in the improving quality of teaching, is yet to be seen on raising pupils' attainment.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, raise standards in writing and mathematics.

To address the issue of raising pupils' attainment the school has created an appropriate plan that sets out relevant timescales and success criteria. Many of the initiatives outlined have only started recently so they have not yet had any measurable impact on pupils' outcomes.