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29 March 2009

Mrs H Pritchard
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Stoney Lane
Kidderminster
Worcestershire
DY10 2LX

Dear Mrs Pritchard,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 March 2010, 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 May 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 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 Worcestershire and the Director for Education for the Worcester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Dr Anna Coyle

Additional Inspector



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

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25–26 March 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, and observed 10 lessons, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and school documents. She met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. Discussions were also held with groups of parents to seek their views about the progress the school has made, the Chair of Governors, and representatives from the local authority. As part of the visit, the procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were checked and the school was asked to remedy minor omissions before the next monitoring visit.

Context

Since the time of the last monitoring visit, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed and took up post in January 2010. There have been no other changes to teaching staff. Pupil numbers are slightly higher than at the last visit because three more pupils have joined Year 3, four have joined the Year 4/5 class and one has joined Year 6.

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

As at the time of the last visit, standards in English, mathematics and science remain well below the national average in Year 6. This picture is a slight improvement on the 2009 test results for Year 6 when standards were very low and pupils made inadequate progress in Years 3 to 6. There is now clear evidence from the school's tracking information to show that the gap between the school's outcomes and the national expectations is beginning to close slowly. Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Progress is gradually improving at Key Stage 2, albeit at a slow and steady rate, as a result of more good teaching in the school. Achievement is now mainly satisfactory and good in some lessons. Teachers' expectations are now suitably high and lessons are pitched at the right level for most pupils, although there is still not enough challenge for the more able. Significant weaknesses remain in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills: for example, poor handwriting and presentation, and poor knowledge of spelling and vocabulary hamper pupils' learning in English. Pupils' mathematical skills continue to be weak.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory due to teachers' better control and discipline which is now a strong feature of the school. However, attendance remains well below the national average, as it was at the time of the last visit. It is currently 90.9% overall and, although the school has recorded higher attendance in some weeks, it has not sustained attendance levels, although the figures show some



improvement this term. Strategies to convince parents to bring their children to school on time have had some, but not enough, impact and there remains work to be done to improve attendance. The school's good involvement with outside agencies has helped to encourage parents to value their children's education and improve attendance but, overall, this remains an area for further development.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve standards and achievement by the end of Year 6 by ensuring that teachers expect more of the pupils and plan work that is pitched at the right level for them all – satisfactory.
- Improve attendance by working more effectively with parents and pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The school has continued to work closely with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Almost all teachers were observed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher as part of this monitoring visit. The inspector and senior leaders agreed that the lesson observations showed the quality of teaching has improved well since the last visit: it is now good overall. Classrooms are colourful, stimulating and vibrant environments. Teachers are working very hard to raise their expectations of pupils and there is a growing sense of commitment and greater consistency across the school. Parents endorse this in their comments by saying: 'The school has improved under the leadership of the new headteacher and the staff work together as a team.' The assessment and marking of pupils' work has improved following the introduction of a clear policy and the implementation of appropriate procedures across the school. However, there are still a few inconsistencies in the use of the colour system for marking and in the use of teachers' written comments to give pupils praise and points for improvement. Marking is notably good in Year 3 in English and mathematics.

At the last visit, the school was judged to have made considerable changes to the curriculum so as to respond to pupils' needs and interests. Since then, the new deputy headteacher has kept up the pace of change by introducing a fresh approach to extend cross-curricular links between subjects through themed activities known as 'Do Something Different'. These well-focused sessions are paving the way for pupils to experience purposeful learning on topics such as gardening, dancing, cooking and computer work. Attempts to involve pupils in their own learning by choosing activities for themselves have had a good impact on their self-esteem and level of independence. There are a few missed opportunities, however, for pupils to practise and improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This is because planning



does not consistently identify key words and vocabulary for them to learn or acknowledge how specific mathematical skills can be used.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is responsive to their needs and includes sufficient opportunities for them to practise and improve basic skills in literacy and numeracy by using them in different subjects – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new senior leadership team is steadily growing in its effectiveness and it has an increased sense of ambition and drive. This stems from the new headteacher's determination and commitment to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards. She is developing a clear vision for the future and is leading the team well by providing a strong role model for colleagues. Improved monitoring strategies are helping senior staff to gather a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and tailor the development plan so that it contains the right actions for improvement. The governing body has developed its role to a satisfactory level and is keen to be involved with the school through practical activities. A greater focus on strategic planning is now needed to enable leaders and governors to steer the school more effectively.

Regular and more accurate use of data information means that leaders are now able to assess pupils' progress more effectively. As a result, actions are beginning to be better targeted towards raising standards. The use of data now has a much higher profile throughout the school and is more widely used by class teachers and senior staff to set targets and monitor progress. However, there remains a lack of sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. This is because tasks are appropriately planned for different groups of pupils in some lessons, but tasks are not sufficiently differentiated in others to ensure that all abilities are appropriately challenged.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels make better use of information about how well pupils are doing in Years 3 to 6 to identify and tackle underachievement as soon as it arises – satisfactory.

External support

The school has had good support from the local authority (LA) since the last visit. Senior advisors have provided good challenging support for the headteacher and school leaders. Regular LA monitoring reports have been accurate and useful to the staff in identifying areas of concern and giving the school suggestions for ways to



improve aspects of its provision. Members of staff have greatly valued the practical training they have received and the advice they have been given. The school improvement partner has been a very supportive visitor in the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Extend the use of assessment in lessons to help teachers accelerate pupils' progress at a faster rate and so raise standards more rapidly.
- Further develop links with parents so as to promote better attendance and involve them in their children's learning.