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12 February 2010

Mrs D Rogan and Miss Y Dilley
The Headteachers
Waterman Primary School
The Boulevard
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1QF

Dear Mrs Rogan and Miss Dilley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Waterman Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 February, 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 June 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 the last inspection - good

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed as part of the partnership working arrangements agreed with Wickford Church of England VC Infants School.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Essex.

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Waterman Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10–11 February 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and the acting headteacher. HMI held meetings with all staff, the chair of governors, the head of the onsite nursery and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The local authority has appointed the headteacher of Wickford Church of England VC Infants, a National Support School, to coordinate the support for this school as executive headteacher. An acting headteacher from the local authority has been appointed from 22 February 2010. During this inspection, the local authority formally committed itself to the maintenance of primary education on this site. This decision has removed the constraint on staff appointments and provided an opportunity to enhance the productivity of the support arrangements agreed with the headteacher and governors of Wickford Church of England VC Infants School.

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

The school's new assessment database is robust and shows clear evidence of pupils' progress since September 2009; HMI compared this data with the evidence of pupils' progress apparent in their books. Similarly, HMI heard pupils from Years 5 and 6 read and found their level of fluency to be inline with age related expectations. Most pupils are now making the progress expected for their age and ability, although the noticeable difference between their reading and writing skills in Years 3 and 4 still exists. Well-organised key skills support work and better use of assessment for learning is helping to provide an improving range of challenging tasks. The school has placed appropriate emphasis on developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills; however, more needs to be done to ensure that individuals and groups of pupils develop simple oral explanations. The small numbers of pupils in each year group has provided the opportunity to plan and deliver increasingly well organised one-to-one intervention/ or support.

Progress since the last inspection

- Raise expectations of what pupils can achieve through setting challenging targets and checking that everyone is working to their potential – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes



Attendance continues to improve and there are now no pupils classed as persistently absent. Current data for the spring term 2010 indicates that attendance is just below the national average. Pupils have responded well to the attendance incentives programme, the instant text reminders to parents, and the home visits by senior staff.

During this visit behaviour was often good and the pupils' attitudes to learning were generally positive although individuals still lacked confidence in their own ability. On all occasions, pupils listened to their peers with respect and were keen to contribute their ideas.

One of the elements in the improvements in attendance and behaviour relates to the school's efforts to engage with parents. Working in collaboration with the onsite children's centre and nursery, the school provides computer literacy courses for parents as part of a community education programme. This allows parents and carers to work on the school's computers whilst their children are in class and the onsite nursery provides a free crèche.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improve the rates of attendance and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils – good.

The effectiveness of provision

HMI observed teaching in all settings and compared well with the outcomes of these observations with those conducted by senior staff in recent weeks. The most effective teaching guided pupils through a series of well-structured tasks. On these occasions the learning support staff provided positive support that engaged the pupils' attention. In a good Year 3-4 mathematics lesson on measurement, the teacher made effective use of the school's new computer-based resources to engage pupils' attention and develop higher level oral responses.

All of the lessons and small group sessions observed were at least satisfactory and some good provision was noted. A scrutiny of pupils' books confirmed the impact of the school's improving assessment for learning strategies. Marking is more consistent than that noted during the previous inspection but needs to be reinforced orally if staff are to be certain pupils understand what to do to improve. Inconsistencies remain in the quality of questioning in general and in plenary sessions. Staff generally use the key learning objectives as the focus of their questions but do not always return to these at the end of the lesson in a well structured review of learning.

Classrooms are bright well-organised learning environments and the use of information and communication technology to improve learning is developing well.



Progress since the last inspection

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by raising the level of challenge, giving pupils more responsibility for their learning and improving the climate in which they work – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Effective leadership and management are improving teaching, learning and standards. The senior team has improved attendance and behaviour and demonstrated the school's capacity to secure the improvements required. Senior colleagues have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and learning as well as what needs to be done to improve provision. The management of teaching and learning is effective.

The governing body has an accurate view of the key areas requiring further development and a new community governor has applied for the vacancy on the governing body. An effective working relationship exists between senior staff, governors, the Children's Centre and the private sector nursery that occupy the same premises.

Progress since the last inspection

- Focus leadership and management at every level on contributing effectively to school self-evaluation in order to raise pupils' achievement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support for the school through the successful partnership work established with Wickford Church of England VC Infants. However, occasional support from local authority consultants, although delivered well, is not providing the programme of daily or weekly support that the local authority's alternative strategy of overstaffing the support school has been proved to provide at other county establishments.

During this visit the local authority gave commitments from the Director of Children, Schools and Families for Essex and the appropriate local authority elected members, to the maintenance of primary provision at Waterman Primary for the foreseeable future. The local authority did well to manage the retirement of the previous senior team and the same skills will need to be utilised to refresh the learning support staff.