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18 March 2010

Mrs Helen York
Headteacher
Christ Church Pellon CE (VC) Primary School
Sandbeds Road
Pellon
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX2 0QQ

Dear Mrs York

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Christ Church Pellon CE (VC) Primary School

Following my visit with Peter McKay, Additional Inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Calderdale.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Christ Church Pellon CE (VC) Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed the work of teaching assistants and teachers working with individuals and groups. They scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, two groups of pupils, the local authority School Improvement Partner, the Chair of the governing body and the headteacher of the partner school. Inspectors also scrutinised the work in pupils' books from across the school.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been some changes to the school's context. One member of the teaching staff has left the school and a temporary assistant headteacher has joined the school on a temporary secondment from another local school. One teacher has been unwell and absent from duty for some weeks but has begun to resume her duties on a planned phased basis. Three teachers have changed the year group that they are teaching. There is one new governor but there remains one vacancy for another local authority governor. Two parent champions have been appointed. The school has entered into a partnership with a local school, is involved in the Improving Schools Programme (ISP) and the local authority has increased its level of support to the school.

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

At the time of the previous inspection attainment across the school was low and pupils were not making the progress that they should be. While attainment continues to be low, there have been some discernable improvements to the rates of progress made by pupils. Senior leaders have established systems designed to improve the progress made by pupils; these include regular assessments and the close tracking of pupils' attainment and progress. The school has correctly identified the need to make sure that teachers' ongoing assessments are accurate and reliable. Close attention to the attainment of pupils is helping teachers to think more about the progress of individuals and the next steps in their learning. This system has led to the identification of pupils who are falling behind or who need extra help. A wide range of intervention strategies have been put in place and these are beginning to help pupils to improve their basic skills in English and mathematics, with some particular success in improving pupils' skills at linking letters and sounds. Although the progress of pupils is improving and the tracking data shows that across the school pupils are making better gains than they did during the previous academic year, the progress of pupils remains inconsistent in some parts of the school.



Although there has been some progress in giving pupils more opportunities to write at length, particularly in Year 6, this remains inconsistent across the school. Planning for teaching pupils about letters and sounds has been improved and regular, daily work on linking letters and sounds is beginning to help pupils in both their reading and writing skills. Inspection evidence confirms that this work is having a positive impact and ensuring that most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. Teaching assistants are all keen to do their best for pupils and work diligently to this end. However, some require further training in order to ensure that they have all of the skills needed to deliver the interventions that they are charged with.

The setting of targets for all pupils is now in place for reading, writing and mathematics. Practices with the use of targets across the school remain inconsistent. Some pupils have a vague idea that they have targets but do not always know and recall what they are. Few are aware of the levels that they are aiming for.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics in both key stages by rigorously tracking pupils' progress and intervening when pupils make insufficient progress; develop the newly introduced programme for learning sounds and letters in Key Stage 1; improve opportunities for pupils to write more extensively – satisfactory

Other relevant outcomes for pupils

The views of pupils and staff that behaviour is improving is supported by the evidence of this visit. Behaviour observed on the playground, in the dining room and assemblies and as pupils move around the school was never less than satisfactory and was sometimes good. Pupils say they have no concerns about bullying or their personal safety. During this visit an inspection focus on behaviour in Key Stage 1 indicated it has improved. The number of pupils excluded has decreased, when compared with the same period last year. The school has well-conceived strategies for managing behaviour which the majority of pupils understand and accept. In particular, pupils appreciate the use of the behaviour charts displayed on the wall of each classroom which link their entitlement to golden time to their behaviour. Similarly, targets in the personal plans used for pupils whose misbehaviour is more persistent are linked to rewards and sanctions, and the school has evidence of their impact on bringing about sustained improvement. However, the disruption of lessons by misbehaviour has not been totally eliminated, partly because the agreed strategies for managing behaviour are not used consistently or with sufficient rigour. Many pupils have underdeveloped listening skills and find it hard to concentrate. When faced with too much talk by teachers or uninteresting tasks, a minority become bored and distracted, they make little effort and can resort to low-level misbehaviour. The instances of more serious misbehaviour are less frequent and are dealt with well and appropriately using a staged sequence of consequences and

sanctions matched to the severity of the offence. That said, the school is in the process of further refining and amending its approach in order to ensure greater consistency of approach by all staff.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that all staff adhere to the policy for managing behaviour and ensuring that pupils' disruptive behaviour does not impede the learning of others – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching observed on this visit ranged from good to inadequate. It is better than at the time of the previous inspection, overall, but is still not strong enough to accelerate all pupils' progress and raise standards, particularly as inadequate teaching has yet to be eliminated. The school has put in place a number of strategies designed to bring improvements in the longer term. Although these have had some impact and there is clear evidence of improvements to the quality of teaching, there remains further work to be done. Staff training and lesson observations by senior leaders have focused on the specific weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. The allocation of teachers to classes takes better account of teachers' experience and expertise and additional staff have been provided for Years 2 and 6. Most crucially, expectations of teachers are higher and are set out in a framework of non-negotiable guidelines for effective practice.

The strengths observed in the teaching on this visit include many lessons that are planned so as to build on what has been done before and teachers make good reference to prior learning. Teachers are beginning to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' prior learning, which is essential if they are to tackle the legacy of some pupils' underachievement. Staff care for pupils well and relationships are positive. Teachers are aware of the need for a purposeful start to lessons. A combination of prompt entry to the classroom and well-planned starter activities mean this is often achieved. The use of short-term learning goals provides pupils with a clear focus for their learning. Marking is regular, thorough and usually indicates what has been done well, although it is less consistent in guiding improvement or informing pupils of their progress towards their targets.

There is little evidence of a closer match of work to pupils' needs. All pupils pursue the same lesson objective and too often all pupils are given the same tasks; the only modification is that some groups are helped by teaching assistants or get more of the teacher's time. Teachers are not routinely using assessment information to target individual pupils with clear and challenging expectations for learning in line with their abilities. Also, teachers are not routinely supporting pupils by providing appropriate tasks and resources. A particular consequence of this is that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always have their learning needs met because they are not given the tasks and resources tailored to their specific needs.



Although lessons start promptly, the pace of learning in most lessons is not yet fast enough because they are structured around too few activities. Invariably, the main teaching points are over-rehearsed with a protracted introduction by the teacher and with pupils being largely passive unless they voluntarily respond to questioning. Too often pupils then work on a single task at a leisurely pace, rather than a variety of short, tightly-timed and varied activities, interspersed with regular reviews of learning. Pupils are not given enough time to work without interruption on tasks which involve extended writing, so the amount and quality of work produced is too variable. Questioning is used in every lesson but it rarely prompts pupils to express and share ideas and stimulate discussion. Pupils are capable of much more than is routinely demanded of them. They respond well when learning is active and fun, such as when Year 4 were challenged to produce 3D shapes from straws and Plasticine.

Although the quality of provision has generally been maintained, areas for development identified at the previous inspection, for example the provision for taking learning outdoors, remain largely unaddressed. There is a striking difference in the way that learning and development opportunities are planned and executed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Year 1 class. Although the support that pupils receive when transferring from Reception to the Year 1 class is positive, they are not always appropriately prepared for this change in learning arrangements. Consequently, it is not surprising that some Year 1 pupils are struggling with the expectations for learning in their current classes. Additionally, there is scope for developing the provision further in the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve pupils' basic skills of letter and number formation, reading and writing.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making effective use of assessment information to provide work which closely matches pupils' needs and by increasing the pace of lessons and setting much higher expectations for the amount and quality of work completed in lessons – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There have been clear improvements in the leadership roles at the most senior level. The headteacher is now well supported by her deputy headteacher and new inclusion manager; there is a clear sense of purpose and direction on the part of the three most senior members of staff. They are all clear about what needs to be done to move the school forward. There has been some good work in developing a partnership with a more successful school; this has included advice and guidance from that school's headteacher and work with other members of staff to identify the features of effective teaching. All has been to good effect and is beginning to have an impact on the work of staff at this school. The support from the local authority through the ISP and links with a partnership school has focused on improving



assessment, tracking, and teaching and learning across the school. There are clear roles and responsibilities for members of the senior leadership team. However, the role of some subject leaders remains underdeveloped.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and developments over the last term mean it is more precise. For example, the regular close observations of teachers and scrutiny of work has helped to identify where planned improvements are having the greatest impact and where further support is needed. Underperformance is being challenged and teachers who need extra training have individual support plans in place. Inspection evidence confirms that, although there remains further work to be done, these support plans are helping to improve the quality of teaching.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Develop effective delegation within the senior management team by ensuring that all members play an active role in the school's improvement – satisfactory

External support

Support for the school has been satisfactory. Following the last inspection, the local authority produced the required statement of action. On evaluation by HMI, the plan was judged to need some small amendments. An amended plan was provided at this inspection and includes greater detail, particularly with regard to the work on letters and sounds. The local authority has supported the establishment of the partnership with another local school. It has also provided staff training and funding for additional staff. Although it has appointed one additional governor to strengthen the governing body, there remains a vacancy.