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29 March 2010

Ms T Kneale
Executive Headteacher
Little Dewchurch CofE Primary School
Little Dewchurch
Hereford
Herefordshire
HR2 6PN

Dear Ms Kneale

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Little Dewchurch CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 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

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 Herefordshire and the Diocese of Hereford.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cartwright".

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Little Dewchurch CofE Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including all of the school's teachers in seven separate sessions, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the Vice-Chair of Governors, the governor with oversight of special educational needs, parents and carers, a representative of the local authority and teachers.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the substantive headteacher has retired. A classroom teacher has left the school, and another class teacher began maternity leave in January 2010. There is an assistant headteacher, and an executive headteacher of a nearby school who has operational oversight.

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

The standards of pupils' work seen on this visit were broadly average with some examples of above average work, notably in younger year groups. Writing standards still lag behind those of reading and mathematics but improvements are evident here since the start of term in 2010. Teachers now have information on the current attainment of their pupils, and on their particular learning needs. Historic information about their prior attainment is considered unreliable by the current leadership and local authority consultants. Marking is thorough enough to identify strengths and weaknesses but suggests pupils 'think about' the issue for the next time. Pupils are not routinely correcting their existing work, or responding to a supplementary question. The special educational needs coordinator from the partner primary school has swiftly audited and mapped the provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities She has also consulted with parents and carers, and their children, in drawing up pupil-friendly individual education plans, which are now in place and accessible to teachers. These are clear, but have not been in place long enough to show in better learning outcomes.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve standards and achievement across the school, and especially in writing in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory
- Improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the gifted and talented – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision



Lesson plans identify a range of possible outcomes for different general abilities of pupils, which represents an important improvement since the last inspection. These plans do not always explicitly address the recently developed individual educational plans of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The better plans identify tasks for pupils by name or group pupils together by prior attainment and assign different activities matched to their abilities. Teachers also give pupil-specific targets to individuals verbally.

Teaching seen at this visit was satisfactory overall, with examples of good practice most evident when pupils were working individually or in small groups on tasks matched to their abilities. For example, in mathematics, pupils were measuring lengths and using that data for calculating perimeters; some were at a very early stage of using rulers to measure to the nearest centimetre, with others attempting National Curriculum Level 4 questions. This vast range of ability and experience of pupils in the wide age-range classes magnifies the need for precise differentiation by task. The stimuli provided for writing tasks were interesting, and motivated the pupils to be creative in their work. In weaker lessons, pupils spent too long as a whole class, waiting to get started on their work. Teachers could expect more independence from pupils, as some pupils are often knowledgeable about the topic and so could use and extend that knowledge from the outset.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher has introduced systematic and accurate assessment of every pupil, every half term with the help of her own school's subject leaders and the local authority consultant staff. This shows almost every pupil making progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The local authority and the executive headteacher have observed lesson quality. Their evidence shows a mixed but essentially satisfactory current picture that has improved since Christmas 2009. The school's own staff are at an early stage of working alongside external experts in developing their monitoring and evaluation skills.

Statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding policy and practice have been met. Fire evacuations have been practised and recorded. A health and safety audit has been conducted, although minor shortfalls in implementing its recommendations were noticed during this visit. Parents expressed their satisfaction in the improvements in the school, particularly in the improved speed and quality of communication between school and home.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management – satisfactory
- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective – satisfactory

External support



Since being subject to special measures, the local authority has provided effective support via consultants, and through the partnership with Marlbrook primary school. These arrangements have allowed a wide and substantial level of personal support for teachers and governors. The local authority action plan now meets Ofsted's expectations.