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14 July 2010

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

Dear Ms Kneale

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Little Dewchurch CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 July 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 September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – outstanding

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 the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Herefordshire and the Director of Education for the Hereford Diocese.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Cartwright".

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Little Dewchurch CofE Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 12 July 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, school managers, a group of parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The governing body of Little Dewchurch have agreed in principal with the governors of Marlbrook Primary school to formalise a partnership arrangement between the two schools. An executive headteacher has oversight of both schools, and Marlbrook is providing additional leadership and management support via its special educational needs coordinator and an assistant headteacher, who has oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. From September 2010, a senior teacher will be in charge of the school on a day-to-day basis, under the overall direction of the executive headteacher.

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

Provisional results of Key Stage 2 tests in 2010 confirmed teachers' assessments and are better in all respects than those from 2009. The higher standards are welcome evidence of the positive impact of improvements to teaching and learning. Some concerns remain, however, with the quality of writing. This was also better in 2010 than in 2009 but remained lower than expected for the current Year 6, given the overall ability of the pupils. At Key Stage 1, with ten pupils in Year 2, equally positive improvements from 2009 were evident. Other tracking data from the school suggests almost all pupils made at least the expected progress overall, including those with special educational needs. School managers are aware that writing standards are still lagging behind and have put in place curriculum strategies to further increase the focus on that area. Work seen during this visit confirmed that attainment in writing, although improving quickly, has not yet caught up with pupils' other outcomes. Some fundamental elements of handwriting quality are weak for Key Stage 2 pupils, and need further development, building upon recently improved provision at Key Stage 1.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to behave very well in lessons and in other activities. They took a full and responsible part in the sports day I observed on one afternoon. A Year 5/6 class took seriously a debate about what constituted 'beauty', offering mature views in a purposeful and enjoyable philosophy for children session. They treated each other, and staff, with courtesy and consideration.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching seen during this inspection was predominantly of good quality, with no substantial weaknesses. All the lesson plans had specific tasks assigned to named pupils of different abilities, taking account of their prior knowledge. Teaching resources had been carefully prepared in advance to provide challenge to each learner. Learning was brisk, because for most of the time pupils were actually reading, writing or solving mathematical problems. Pace slowed briefly during whole-class discussions but these were relatively short episodes. Pupils did not have to spend too long listening passively to their teacher and this represents a significant improvement in teaching quality since the previous visit. The volume of written work has increased, and lessons included substantial sessions where pupils wrote on their own, with good support and intervention from teachers, support teachers and assistants. Marking was thorough and diagnostic, with many examples of pupils responding to this by making corrections or re-writing a passage to the required standard. In some instances, comments had not been specific enough, such as 'don't forget your commas', but this aspect of teaching has markedly improved and its impact shows in rising standards of pupils' work over time.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher and members of her team have moved swiftly to improve the quality of teaching and learning. At the heart of their approach has been a rigorous programme of weekly monitoring of provision that is bringing about much better planning of lessons, and driving up the pace of learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved because very clear individual education plans are now informing class teachers of particular learning needs. Pupils and their parents have been closely involved in developing these plans. Parents spoke very positively about the improvements they have seen at the school, and with their child's progress. Governors have acted commendably quickly to set in train arrangements to secure the long-term quality of leadership and management of the school. Much has already been achieved through the excellent leadership of the executive headteacher and her leadership team. Some further changes to the teaching complement are planned for September 2010. Health and safety procedures are in place and evidence shows regular checking of provision. Further improvements to site safety have been carried out since my previous visit. Given the consistently good progress on all fronts since the previous visit, the net improvement



has been outstanding and is indicative of a secure and effective capacity for further improvements.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The impact of external support has been good. The local authority continues to broker the increasingly effective partnership between Little Dewchurch and Marlbrook schools. The local authority has also moderated teachers' assessments of pupils' work made by staff from both schools and is confident that teachers are sufficiently accurate in judging pupil progress. This allows the school to use information on pupils' progress as a secure basis for intervention as necessary.