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20 May 2010

Mrs Helen Williams  
Orchards Church of England Primary School  
Cherry Road  
Wisbech  
PE13 3NP

Dear Mrs Williams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Orchards Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with June Woolhouse, additional inspector, to your school on Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 May 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 December 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 be appointed subject to prior agreement from the lead inspector.

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 Diocesan Director of Education and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Orchards Church of England Primary School, Wisbech

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18–19 May 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 14 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, key staff, groups of pupils, two governors and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

Since the last inspection, one teacher has been on extended sick leave and one has left the school. An experienced consultant has been seconded to help the school set up an efficient system for recording and monitoring assessment data. An expert teacher has joined the school as leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

The school has substantially improved the system for recording assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. Successful training has improved the confidence of teachers in making accurate assessments of pupils. It is now possible to monitor how well pupils are doing in relation to their targets and to analyse the progress of individuals and groups. This information is beginning to be used to identify underachievement and to allocate additional support and intervention programmes.

The assessment information for pupils in Years 2 and 6 indicates that their attainment in English and mathematics is likely to be similar to that in 2009 and remain low. However, Year 2 pupils have made at least expected progress this year. Year 6 pupils are close to expected progress this year, although their progress since Year 3 is likely to be well below that expected for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Year 2 do not make as much progress as their peers, but those in Year 6 make better progress in reading and mathematics than the average for their class. Children join the Nursery class with skills well below those expected for their ages. The latest analysis of performance shows that children have made better progress this year although, overall, they are still below the expected levels.

Pupils' progress is beginning to improve in some years and their attitudes to learning are also improving. In the lessons observed, pupils generally showed interest in their work. They listened well to the teacher and followed instructions. They enjoyed working in pairs and small groups. However, too often, a lack of confidence or weak basic skills limited the progress that pupils made in lessons. This gap between where pupils are in their learning and where they should be is currently too wide to ensure that the school reaches its target.



Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English and mathematics to at least the national average— inadequate.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance has improved slightly over the year but remains low. The school has made important improvements in tackling the persistent absence of a proportion of pupils. The family support leader maintains rigorous data which track pupils' attendance on a daily basis. Careful analysis pinpoints where there are attendance problems and the school follows up with telephone calls and letters to establish the reasons for absence. In addition, families are supported in recognising the importance of regular attendance and the consequences to their children's progress if absence persists. Families new to this country are well-supported by bilingual teaching assistants who explain the school system. Parents are beginning to understand that the school must be informed about any absence. The school has introduced fast-track procedures to respond to extreme cases and this has led to some court referrals.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall and good when teaching is effective. They behave well around the school because adults set high expectations and intervene quickly if there is any problem. Pupils' understanding of how to be healthy is satisfactory. They are enthusiastic about sport and would like to do more in school. Although they report some bullying, they agree this is dealt with quickly by staff.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- increase attendance to at least the national average – satisfactory.

#### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is improving. On this visit, almost all lessons observed were satisfactory and half were good. The headteacher, with local authority staff, regularly monitors lessons and keeps comprehensive records of the areas for improvement. She has set clear expectations for teachers' planning and the way that lessons are structured. There is now greater consistency and most pupils understand what they should be learning. Teachers try to make learning enjoyable and several of the lessons observed contained good activities which gained pupils' interest and motivated them to do well. However, there were also a few lessons which did not inspire pupils and where their concentration wandered. In the best lessons, teachers used questions effectively to challenge a range of pupils and also used opportunities for pupils to talk in pairs to develop their ideas. In other lessons, too many questions did not extend pupils' thinking or challenge them sufficiently. Teaching assistants mostly provide good support to small groups and individuals, including to pupils who speak English as an additional language, many of whom rely on them to help explain key words and ideas.



Subject leaders have supported class teachers in improving their understanding of National Curriculum levels and their assessment of pupils' work is now more accurate. There is increasing opportunity for teachers to share pupil assessments and review progress across age groups. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, there is no common system for feedback and setting targets evident in pupils' books and the quality of teachers' comments varies too much. Although pupils sometimes assess their own work or that of their peers, this is not a regular feature of their lessons and, as a result, they are not always clear exactly what they need to do to make their work better.

The curriculum focuses on literacy and numeracy, with a considerable amount of intervention for small groups and individuals to accelerate the development of their basic skills. There is a comprehensive programme of enrichment which broadens pupils' experiences and enables pupils to apply their key skills within topics and theme days, for example on the Tudors.

Pupils feel safe and have confidence in referring any issues to adults. Essential safeguarding requirements, including staff training in child protection procedures, are in place. Teaching assistants assess the needs of children who speak English as an additional language as soon as they arrive in school. The newly appointed leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved links with parents and carers, and involves them in their children's learning, for example in encouraging reading together.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has strengthened the team of senior leaders and sets a very clear vision for the school's improvement which is reflected in its improvement plan. She has built the confidence of staff and there is now a strong sense of developing teamwork and higher morale. Senior and subject leaders regularly monitor provision such as lesson planning, teaching and marking, and report back on the strengths and areas for development. The headteacher uses a cumulative record of the areas for action arising from lesson observations to plan training and support for teachers. She holds termly meetings with teachers to review pupils' progress and to devise strategies for improving attainment. Older pupils talk of the improvement in the school in the last year.

Senior staff have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school, including the quality of teaching. Subject leaders are growing in confidence and are increasingly able to lead developments in their areas of responsibility. However, many of the approaches and systems are still in their



early stages and are only just beginning to have an impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

The governing body has received support from the local authority and the Diocese. It has reorganised its committees and roles to enable governors better to hold the school to account. The chair of governors has a developing understanding of the role and is a regular visitor to the school. The governing body has recently taken on oversight of areas to assist in the evaluation of the school's performance and progress. It is now better placed to carry out its role in challenging senior staff to bring about improvement but this change is in its very early stages.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- increase the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory.

### External support

External support is satisfactory. The local authority has devised an effective plan to support the school. A substantial number of consultants and officers are programmed to provide training and support in their specialist areas. Teachers appreciate the opportunity to work alongside consultants in monitoring provision and planning developments. This has improved their knowledge and confidence to lead change. The secondment of an experienced leader to assist the school in devising an efficient system for monitoring pupils' progress has been invaluable in providing reliable data in a form that can be analysed and used in planning. Experienced advisory governors demonstrate how the work of the school can be monitored. Although this initiative is at an early stage, it is beginning to improve the capability and confidence of the governing body in holding the school to account.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Develop approaches to improve the quality and consistency of teachers' marking, comments and target-setting to ensure that pupils are clear about exactly how they need to improve their work and when they have done so.

