

Serco Inspections
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way
Middle Lane
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Monday 10 May 2010

Mrs Louise Pickard
Dilhorne Endowed CofE (VA) Primary School
Godley Lane
Dilhorne
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent
ST10 2PF

Dear Mrs Pickard

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Dilhorne Endowed CofE (VA)
Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Friday 7 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 October 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, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire and the Board of Education of the Diocese of Lichfield.

Yours sincerely

Glynn Storer
Additional Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Dilhorne Endowed CofE (VA) Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Friday 7 May 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited three lessons and scrutinised documents and assessment data. The inspector also met with the headteacher, a group of pupils, parents, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the school was made subject to special measures, the teacher who was working with Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils has left the school. For the summer term, two teachers, both of whom have considerable experience with Key Stage 1 age group are sharing the teaching of the class for half of the week and the headteacher is responsible for the teaching in the other half. From September, arrangements are in place for one of these teachers to remain in post and for the headteacher to continue to teach the class for half of the week. There has also been one change to support staff but this does not significantly alter the range or frequency of support allocated to teachers and pupils. Work to improve and extend outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has begun and will be on-going throughout the summer term.

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

Because year groups are so small, standards vary considerably from year to year depending on the make-up of any particular cohort and statistical data can be hugely affected by the performance of a single pupil. That said, the school's tracking data, pupils' performance in lessons and the work in pupils' books indicate that in Years 2 and 6, standards are broadly average. Virtually all pupils this year are on course to meet challenging targets that the school set for them. This halts the decline in standards reported by the previous inspection. Importantly, pupils' progress is also beginning to improve. There is no evidence of marked underachievement and as a result most are currently progressing at the expected rate. An important factor that underpins recent improvements is the skilful leadership provided by the headteacher. Her determination, and a well-judged balance of support and challenge, has enabled staff to move on from the events of the previous inspection. All are now 'on board' and are beginning to act on the good advice and training that they have received. One immediate benefit is that pupils are much more involved in their lessons. They report that their lessons are more enjoyable than they were and that learning has become fun. While there is still a

long way to go in some areas, staff have begun to re-establish the conditions under which effective learning can take place.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Accelerate pupils' progress and improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the good advice teachers receive through monitoring by the local authority is consistently put into practice; and
 - using strategies to ensure that all pupils take an active role in all parts of lesson - satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' attitudes are now positive. Pupils enjoy school, benefit from consistently good relationships with staff and with their peers, and are keen to highlight recent improvements. Pupils' behaviour in and around school is consistently good and contributes to the pleasant, 'family' atmosphere that pervades the school. In speaking about his teacher, one pupil commented: 'I always have my happy moments with her.' Pupils' roles in the life of the school are more active than they were. Members of the school council speak with pride about the extent to which they help to determine the termly clubs and other activities and about how well attended they are. Spiritual, moral and social development is generally good and the school has made a sound start in strengthening provision for cultural development, through improved plans for teaching about other faiths and through educational visits to places that exemplify religious and cultural diversity. Much of this work remains currently at the planning stage but improved resources already in school are evidence of the school's commitment to its implementation in the new school year.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching seen during the monitoring visit was never less than satisfactory and in one lesson it was good. Teachers are moving from set, termly assessment tests to a more continuous regime of assessing pupils' performance and are beginning to take account of what they know about pupils in planning their lessons. For example, pupils are generally grouped by ability rather than age. This makes for a better match of tasks to pupils' learning needs. However, the use of assessment information is not precise enough to result in planning that identifies exactly what level each group should be working at and what the characteristics of work at that level are. Consequently, learning objectives remain too broad and general and, as such, do not always promote best possible progress. There is also more work needed to ensure that teachers' assessments are reliable and form a secure basis for the targets that the school sets. Teachers have established satisfactory expectations of pupils' behaviour and response in lessons and this has been a factor in improving

pupils' performance. However, pupils are not yet sufficiently self-motivated to produce their best work at all times because teachers' expectations related to work rate are not high enough. Lessons seen during the visit lacked urgency. The pace was too relaxed or the teacher accepted work of a lower standard than that of which pupils were capable. In these lessons, pupils could have achieved more.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved considerably. It now takes full account of all of the required areas of learning and gives children access to learning opportunities both in and out of doors, although improvements to the outdoor area are on-going. There is currently only one child in the Reception year. The work that she receives is suitable to her age and ability and there are regular opportunities for her to make choices and to engage in purposeful play. These developments also benefit younger, less mature pupils in Year 1 by improving their transition to learning based on the National Curriculum. Refurnishing and re-equipping this whole area has benefited pupils throughout Key Stage 1. It is 'child friendly', provides easy access to good quality resources and promotes independent learning satisfactorily.

Work on improving the curriculum has begun. The school has mapped out a curriculum with new cross-curricular topics designed to be interesting and relevant to pupils and, therefore, to improve the quality of their learning. A key feature, intended to raise standards further, will be the systematic reinforcing of basic literacy and numeracy skills through work in other subjects. However, this work is at a very early stage of development and many important elements are yet to be determined. For example:

- How will staff ensure that pupils have full access to information and communication technology as an aid to learning?
- How and when will developments in assessing pupils' performance be carried into the wider curriculum?
- What will be the range and quality of educational visits, special events and other first hand experiences used to enhance pupils' learning and especially that of boys?

The opening of a Breakfast Club has been a much welcomed extension of the support and care provided by the school, which has also had a positive impact on attendance rates and on pupils' punctuality.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Accelerate pupils' progress and improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - using assessment information precisely to plan activities that will match the range of ability within the class
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do, including the way they present their written work and the amount they produce
 - satisfactory

- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - producing a whole-school curriculum which ensures pupils develop skills and knowledge systematically across different subjects over time
 - using different resources, including information and communication technology, to engage pupils' interests, especially that of boys - inadequate

- Improve provision in Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - Meeting fully the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework
 - Developing a strategic plan for improving resources, especially for the outdoor environment - good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has gained the respect of staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers. All express confidence in her to lead the school through this challenging phase in its development and to bring about the necessary improvements. She has already taken effective action to improve teaching and learning, although some initiatives are at a very early stage of implementation and have therefore not begun to have an impact on pupils' learning and achievement. In respect of the specific management-related issues raised by the previous inspection, progress has been limited. Arrangements are in place for assessing pupils' attainments, but these assessments cannot yet be regarded as totally accurate and their use in lesson planning is not fully embedded. The headteacher has begun to track pupils' progress and to hold staff to account for the progress (or lack of it) that their pupils make. However, the headteacher is aware that pupil progress meetings need to be more frequent if they are to be fully effective in accelerating pupils' progress.

The governing body has undertaken training to strengthen its understanding of governors' roles and responsibilities. However, they still do not gather enough first-hand information about aspects of the school's performance to be effective in holding the school to account for what it achieves. Similarly, governors have little understanding of how the school might contribute to community cohesion. The headteacher and Chair of Governors have conducted some initial enquires, but in-depth strategic planning for addressing religious, ethnic and socio-economic issues in a local, national and global context has not yet begun.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring tracking and target-setting systems contain accurate information about what pupils know and can do

- regularly reviewing pupils' progress to hold staff to account for the progress their pupils make
- ensuring that statutory requirements regarding community cohesion are met
- ensuring that governors acquire the knowledge and skills they need to equip them to support and challenge the work of the school - satisfactory

External support

The local authority's statement of action forms a sound basis for its proposed support for the school. When the statement was first submitted to Ofsted, HMI highlighted some shortcomings in the structure of the package of proposals. The local authority has amended its statement in the light of HMI comments. The revised statement puts in place clear arrangements for taking account of the views of parents and carers; parents confirm that these have taken place. Monitoring has been strengthened, with a large majority of monitoring activities undertaken by persons other than those leading training or implementation and with clearer 'milestones' identified against which to evaluate success of the actions undertaken.

The headteacher confirms that support offered in the statement of action has been delivered. Training for staff and governors has been well-received and has led to the implementing of improved classroom strategies, especially in relation to provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to the establishing of suitable arrangements for assessment and for the setting of challenging targets for the raising of attainment and to important groundwork on the revised curriculum. However, at the time of the first monitoring visit, most of these initiatives are embryonic and have not had sufficient time to embed or to impact on pupils' achievement.