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29 June 2010

Mr M Fletcher
Acting Headteacher
Watermoor Church of England Primary School
Watermoor Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1JR

Dear Mr Fletcher

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 June 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 February 2010. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

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 Gloucestershire and the Director of the Children and Young People's Department for the Diocese of Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Watermoor Church of England Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, visited lessons and looked at a wide range of the pupils' written work. HMI met with the acting headteacher, executive headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Following the previous inspection the headteacher resigned. Subsequently, the local authority, with the agreement of the governing body, introduced a collaborative arrangement with a local successful primary school, Bishop's Cleeve Primary near Cheltenham, to support improvement at Watermoor. The headteacher at Bishop's Cleeve is the executive headteacher of both schools and the deputy headteacher from Bishop's Cleeve is the acting headteacher at Watermoor. The partnership arrangements took effect from the beginning of the summer term 2010, although both the executive headteacher and the acting headteacher visited the school towards the end of the spring term 2010, in order to undertake preliminary evaluations of provision and outcomes.

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

Standards of attainment remain low and generally below the levels expected for the pupils' ages, particularly in mathematics and writing. Rates of progress over time and in English and mathematics lessons are far too slow, which means that pupils' achievement is inadequate. Some success has been achieved to improve the pupils' understanding of the place value of numbers and this has led to rising standards in this aspect of mathematics. For example, in relation to place value, 79% of the pupils are currently working at the level expected for their age, a 39% increase since the beginning of the summer term 2010. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of number facts and number patterns is weak. This was demonstrated in lessons where pupils struggled to manipulate numbers effectively and accurately calculate the answers to simple number problems. Very few pupils reach the level expected for their age in writing. The quality of writing in pupils' books is unsatisfactory and often poor, although there are signs of better quality pieces of writing more recently, as a result of improvements in teachers' marking.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics for all groups – inadequate.



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning and school life are generally positive. They are good-humoured and welcoming to visitors, polite and willing to talk about their work. Most pupils try to do their best, even when their work is too easy or too difficult. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually satisfactory but deteriorates when adults' expectations are too low and teachers' explanations and instructions cause confusion, rather than providing sufficiently clear advice and guidance to help pupils acquire new skills and knowledge. Pupils' attendance is currently 95.2%, which is above the national average for primary schools.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate, despite the recent and relevant initiatives introduced by the new leadership team. While all teachers follow a consistent planning format, weaknesses in identifying precisely what pupils are expected to learn are impacting negatively on pupils' performance in lessons. In nearly all year groups, and particularly in mathematics and writing, the pupils' work does not take enough account of their different starting points and capabilities. As a result, tasks are often far too difficult for some and far too easy for others. This limits rates of progress and frequently results in the pupils becoming restless and inattentive.

Improvements have been made to the structure and organisation of lessons which have the potential to lift pupils' achievement levels. However, the implementation of new systems and approaches are not sufficiently understood by the teachers, who, despite the best efforts and appropriate direction of the new leadership team, are struggling to amend their practice in order to tackle effectively the causes of underachievement. There are currently too many occasions when teachers miss opportunities to correct misconceptions and when not enough time is given to teaching important strategies to improve the pupils' knowledge, understanding and key skills.

While there are a few examples to demonstrate where the effective deployment of teaching assistants has a positive impact on raising standards, this is not consistent. All too often teaching assistants are not deployed effectively and they remain passive observers, rather than active participants in the pupils' learning.

The use of assessment information to improve the quality of lesson planning, thereby increasing rates of progress, is at a very early stage of development and implementation. Currently, assessment is not used well enough to plan tasks that capture the pupils' interests and motivate them to improve at a faster rate than previously. In one lesson in Year 5/6 the pupils achieved satisfactorily because their work was pitched generally accurately to what they needed to learn next, but this



was an isolated occasion. All too often the pace of learning in lessons is far too slow and expectations are too low.

Some success has been achieved in introducing individual pupil targets, particularly in mathematics and English lessons. Many pupils know their targets and speak confidently about what they need to do in order to achieve them. Teachers' planning refers to pupils' targets but does not always show how activities should take account of the broad spread of ability within a target band. All too often this results in pupils carrying out work at the same level of difficulty, rather than at the level which is appropriate for them to gain the next step in their learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the use of assessment to increase progress and raise expectations in all lessons – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There is no doubt that the new leadership team has brought much needed clarity and sense of educational direction and purpose to the school's work. The executive headteacher and acting headteacher have accurately identified the causes of the school's weaknesses, and their early evaluations of provision and outcomes are rigorous, robust and focused well on what needs to be done to improve the quality of education. The acting headteacher and the executive headteacher have quickly established positive relationships with the governing body and staff, which fully support the work they are doing to bring about sustainable and lasting improvement.

The leadership team has introduced important changes to teachers' planning, arrangements for managing the pupils' behaviour, systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and a rigorous overhaul of monitoring the pupils' performance. The acting headteacher has driven important changes to assessing and tracking the pupils' progress and their attainment, and the new systems have the potential to raise standards, lift achievement and hold teachers to account for the progress made by the pupils in their care. Pupil performance and progress meetings have been introduced, which provide a solid foundation for further improvement. These are all extremely important initiatives, and much has been achieved in a relatively short period of time. Nevertheless, and although the school is in a much more secure position than previously, there has been too little time for the actions taken to have a sufficiently positive impact on tackling and eventually eliminating weaknesses, particularly in teaching and learning.

The role of subject leaders and the deputy headteacher in leading and driving improvements is underdeveloped and inadequate. There are currently no subject leaders for mathematics and literacy, although the governors have appointed two teachers to fill these roles. Both teachers are expected to join the school on a full-time basis at the beginning of the autumn term 2010. The acting headteacher has



good plans in place to develop the roles of senior staff and to hold them to account for improvement in their area of responsibility.

The new arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision and outcomes are contributing to a more systematic and coherent approach to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Lessons are monitored frequently and feedback is given to teachers to help them improve their work. However, the written feedback to teachers is not sufficiently sharp or focused on eliminating endemic weaknesses. Areas for development are not translated into sufficiently precise or prioritised targets for improvement, and there are no review dates for following up whether teachers have met their targets and improved their practice. Similarly, the impact of teaching on the pupils' learning and their progress in lessons is not given sufficient priority.

Governors are coming to terms with the changes needed to eliminate weaknesses and improve the quality of education. There is however much to do in order for the governing body to fully hold the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils. Currently governing body meetings do not focus sufficiently on how well the school is tackling the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection. There is a lack of clarity about how the governors should make a more positive contribution to school improvement.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Strengthen the way leaders at all levels drive and sustain improvement – inadequate.

External support

Following the previous inspection, and subsequent resignation of the headteacher, the local authority acted swiftly and appropriately to put in place a sustainable and proven quality of leadership and management. The collaborative arrangement with Bishop's Cleeve Primary has provided the school with clear and unequivocal leadership, which is demonstrated in the wide range of relevant initiatives that have been introduced.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose and provides a good framework for improvement. It is being closely followed by local authority officers, who are working with the school. The actions identified in the statement of action have been carried out and have made a satisfactory contribution to building better foundations for the future. The local authority and governors' project group have held their first meeting to monitor the school's progress and a number of senior officers have carried out monitoring visits. Local authority consultants continue to provide a range of satisfactory support although their efforts have not yet made a sufficiently positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The



school's challenge and development adviser has accurately evaluated the school's progress so far and provides good support to the acting headteacher.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and increase rates of progress in writing.
- Eliminate weaknesses in teaching and learning.