

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



Thursday 23 September 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 Wednesday 22 September, 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 October 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 – Good

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 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 second monitoring inspection on Wednesday 22 September 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited two lessons and scrutinised documents and assessment data. The inspector also met the headteacher, a group of pupils and two members of the governing body, and gathered the views of a sample of parents at the start of the school day.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the school roll has fallen from 37 to 24. This has necessitated a reduction in staffing. The school now employs one full-time teacher and one part-time (0.5) teacher. The headteacher supports teaching and learning by undertaking a 0.5 teaching commitment spread across both key stages. There has been a similar reduction in support staff. A part-time teaching assistant has left the school but the school is still able to deploy one full-time support worker to each of the two classes. The school has further improved the learning environment by providing new furniture and fittings for both classrooms and by completing work on the covered outdoor learning area for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Improvements in pupils' progress noted at the last monitoring visit have continued. These improvements are not immediately evident in the most recent national assessments for pupils in Year 6, because the school had had too little time to address fully weaknesses in teaching and learning and in provision before the national tests took place. This fact and the very small cohort of six pupils combined to make the 2010 statistics disappointing, because they did not accurately reflect the improvements that the school was making or the beneficial impact they were having on pupils' learning and progress. To the credit of the headteacher and staff, they kept up the drive to raise standards until the very end of the summer term. As a result, by the end of the school year, five out of six attained the nationally expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. Most had made satisfactory progress during Key Stage 2 and good progress during the last school year, particularly in the period from April to July.

All pupils in Year 2 attained or exceeded the nationally expected level. Historic underachievement is being worked out of the system, giving pupils a firmer platform on which to build as they move through the school. The school sets challenging targets for all pupils and staff pursue them vigorously. The tracking of pupils in other year groups shows a generally satisfactory, though still somewhat patchy picture of

progress. However, increasingly detailed assessment procedures now form the basis for identifying and supporting any pupil at risk of underachieving and there are already striking examples of the success of such interventions. There are many factors underpinning the school's continuing improvement (see provision below). The headteacher's efforts to build consistency of approach amongst staff have met with continued success, though there is still a way to go in this respect. Nevertheless, the launch of a new curriculum aimed specifically at involving pupils in their learning and promoting enjoyment has been received positively by staff and pupils alike and is beginning to make lessons more actively engaging. Pupils' consistently good behaviour and response in lessons still contribute to improving learning and progress.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Views expressed by pupils mirror closely those given during the last monitoring visit. These are overwhelmingly positive and there is no evidence to indicate that outcomes for pupils are any less than those reported at that time. Pupils continue to benefit from the caring family atmosphere that pervades the school. In the lessons seen during this visit, pupils were really 'up for it'. As teachers raised their expectations and levels of challenge, pupils responded well and, as they 'raised their game', their learning improved. In discussion, pupils stated that lessons are more challenging and that this is something that they like. Some of the school's plans to foster and strengthen aspects of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are now coming into reality. For example, pupils have already visited a socially and culturally different area, met with pupils in a school there and visited some of their places of worship. Each topic in the new curriculum has community based activities and enterprise topics but it is still too early to evaluate their impact on pupils learning and achievement.

The effectiveness of provision

Pupils' progress is accelerating because teaching is getting better. Teaching seen during the monitoring visit was good. A key factor in recent improvements in teaching is that teachers are making more and better use of assessment information in the planning and delivery of lessons. Teachers have a clearer understanding of how well each individual pupil is doing and of their next steps in learning. The pitch of lessons is accurate. Lessons are challenging, but well-structured activities and the flexible grouping of pupils across the age and ability range ensure that all succeed

and make progress. Particularly effective practice includes short one to one sessions, where adults ensure that younger pupils understand and respond to points that have arisen through the marking of work. This approach personalises pupils' learning and ensures that the benefit from the guidance they receive. Similarly, when the teacher monitors work in progress effectively and moves pupils on appropriately, the pace of learning remains high and progress improves. An examination of pupils' work books indicates that the school still has a little way to go to achieve complete consistency but recent developments mark a significant step forward in teachers' understanding of how to promote effective learning. The book scrutiny also showed that teachers have been successful in embedding higher expectations in relation to the quality and quantity of work that pupils produce.

As at the time of the last visit, there is currently only one child in the Reception Year. Nevertheless, the school has continued to extend and improve provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The planned improvement to the outdoor learning area has now been completed. The parent of the child in reception was delighted with the induction process. Observations during the visit show that he is settled and happy. The process of assessing his attainment on entry and his immediate learning needs is well under way. Planning specifically for this child ensures that he gains experience systematically in all areas of learning and has frequent opportunities to make choices and to grow in independence.

Planning for the new curriculum is now complete. The school has all of the resources that it needs for staff to teach the new cross-curricular topics. Pupils in both key stages are currently engaged on the first topics. An immediate benefit is that pupils and staff alike are enthusiastic and, as one pupil said, they 'can't wait to get stuck in'. Planning has been exceptionally thorough. It is not yet possible to evaluate its impact on pupils learning, for example on that of boys, because the delivery of the two- and four-year rolling programmes is only just beginning. Nevertheless, teachers already know exactly where and how pupils will apply and reinforce key skills and benefit from the use of information and communication technology as an aid to learning. Enrichment is also key feature. Every topic will have an educational visit or special event to give it a high level of relevance, interest and enjoyment. Visits to an outdoor adventure centre, to the British Museum, to the Viking Centre in York and to the caverns at Castleton are already in the pipeline.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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.
 Good progress

- Improve Early Years Foundation Stage provision 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 progress
- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
- producing a whole school curriculum that ensures that 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.
- Satisfactory progress

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Parents and governors continue to express high levels of confidence in the capacity of the headteacher to bring about improvement and they value highly her successes to date. The combined evidence from two monitoring visits indicates that the quality of education provided by the school is now significantly better than it was just 11 months ago. The headteacher has a relentless approach to driving improvement. Rigorous systems for evaluating the school's performance and for accurately tracking pupils' progress are firmly embedded. Monitoring and feedback to staff are weekly events and the headteacher uses half-termly pupil progress meetings effectively to maintain a strong focus on learning and achievement and to hold staff to account for the performance of their pupils. However, the real secret of her success is that she leads by example. As part of the teaching team, she is a model of good practice. She does not ask others to do anything that she is not prepared and able to do herself. Whatever the task, she always does it well. This approach is an inspiration to staff and maintains the good pace of school improvement, despite heavy workloads that result from being such a small school. To this end, team spirit is strong and levels of mutual support and co-operation commendable.

Since the last visit the governing body has taken prompt and effective steps to strengthen its oversight of the school. A revised committee structure gives the governing body a more strategic role and involves more governors in the task of monitoring aspects of the school's work. Importantly, the governing body and staff have agreed a schedule of first hand evidence gathering to include classroom visits, work scrutiny, discussions with pupils and data analysis. This programme has already begun and allows governors to speak with authority and, where necessary, challenge aspects of the school's performance that have been the subject of this level of monitoring.

The school has also begun to address the requirement to promote community cohesion. The headteacher has ensured that the principles of promoting community cohesion are embodied in the new curriculum, which has the potential to be a force for good in this respect. A new governor, with significant expertise in this area, has conducted training for other governors. Consequently, governors understand what

needs to be done but have yet to conduct an audit of need, draw up an action plan and include community cohesion in their monitoring regime.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensure that tracking and target-setting 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 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. Good progress

External support

The headteacher and chair of governors confirm that the local authority has continued to provide the support outlined in its statement of action. This support has been effective in enabling the school see through and embed assessment procedures that have already had a beneficial impact on pupils' progress and achievement. It has also enabled staff to bring to completion initiatives, such as the revised curriculum, which was no more than embryonic at the time of the last visit.