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15 February 2013

Mr Andrew Bloom
Worlingworth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Shop Street
Worlingworth
Woodbridge
IP13 7HX

Dear Mr Bloom

Special measures monitoring inspection of Worlingworth Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed in any area of the school.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Suffolk and the Director of Education for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2012

- Accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information to match tasks to pupils' abilities
 - improving opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, particularly in reading and writing
 - ensuring pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are provided with work that is carefully adapted for their needs, builds their confidence and improves their achievement.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - planning well-paced lessons with clear and succinct introductions and appropriate time allowed for pupils to develop their skills
 - marking work consistently and setting sharp targets for pupils that identify what they need to learn next.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing the leadership skills of staff so that they share fully in the responsibility of improving teaching, learning and pupils' achievement
 - extending the part played by the governing body in monitoring all areas of the school's work so they can play a more active part in promoting school improvement.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 13–14 February 2013

Evidence

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of school, the executive headteacher, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. All four classes were visited, and opportunities taken to scrutinise pupils' work. A small number of parents and carers were interviewed.

Context

Many changes have been made since the last inspection that placed the school into special measures. Just prior to the last inspection a partnership with a nearby academy, Stradbroke High School, was established. This has developed further and a new head of school has been appointed at Worlingworth. The headteacher of Stradbroke has taken on an executive headteacher role, being responsible for both schools. This has enabled the exchange of good practice and secondary school staff regularly visit for this purpose. Two out of three teachers have been replaced since the past inspection. Many improvements have been made to the school's curriculum. Notably, the single Key Stage 2 class containing pupils from Years 3,4,5 and 6 is split for literacy and numeracy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last inspection, the results of national tests for the academic year 2011–12 have become available. Numbers of pupils are very small and these data must be treated with caution. However, they indicate strong performance in the Year 1 phonics screening test, and a generally improving attainment trend in mathematics, writing and reading in Key Stage 1. Attainment in writing remains below the national average, though mathematics and reading are now above. At Key Stage 2, data are erratic over the past three years with very small numbers of pupils. The overall progress that pupils make across Key Stages 1 and 2 remains below the national average, although the school's own assessment data suggest early improvements in the progress currently being made in Year 6.

Those parents interviewed stated that their children are now making better progress and are learning more. In class, pupils are keen and able. HMI observed children willing to learn in all classes, readily participating in activities or working collaboratively with their peers. They work independently when given the opportunity, and this is happening more often than at the last inspection.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The school has introduced regular and systematic assessment of pupils' attainment. HMI looked closely at the standards of pupils' work and their level of learning in class. The school's assessment is broadly accurate. Although it is too soon for this information to be used to determine trends or improvements over time, it is being used to help structure classes. Lesson planning has improved. Teachers now have detailed data about attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, and are therefore able to plan lessons to ensure that all pupils are stimulated to learn their best. The success with which this is done is uneven however, the best practice being in Key Stage 1.

Pupils rise to challenges well. HMI encouraged small groups to undertake problem-solving in mathematics at a level above age-related expectations, and in topics that pupils had no experience of. They successfully used their reasoning skills to solve the problems and enjoyed doing it. This approach was also seen in a joint Years 3 and 4 mathematics class in which the Year 3 pupils were working a full year above age-related expectations. Pupils do have significant gaps in their understanding and knowledge, because of the legacy of weak teaching. Sometimes teachers have to address these gaps and teach material that is at a lower level than pupils are capable of working at. This slows progress.

Much work has been undertaken to improve provision for those who have special educational needs or disabilities. With the support of staff from the high school, better assessment has been introduced so that pupils' needs are better understood. Progress is now closely monitored and specialist teaching aids for literacy introduced. In addition, those pupils who need it are taken out of class and given discrete literacy and numeracy lessons tailored to their individual needs.

Target setting has improved. Marking is much better than at the last inspection and homework more regular, a point noted by parents. Pupils are now given short-term goals. Long-term individual targets have been set, based on broadly accurate assessment. However, the teaching and learning strategies necessary to attain these targets are still under development.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management have improved markedly since the last inspection. The executive headteacher and head of school are giving the school a clear direction for improvement. The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and weaknesses. Improvement planning is strong and expectations are high. Self-evaluations are accurate, detailed, and have clear timescales and deadlines. Persons responsible for meeting targets are identified. Progress towards them is monitored by the management team, but until now has not been effectively monitored by

governors. They recognise that they have been too dependent on information and analyses provided by senior staff. One reason for this has been lack of familiarity with school performance data. However, some training in this has been undertaken and further training is planned. This will enable governors to make independent and detailed challenge to school performance, and the quality of teaching and learning that underlies it.

The lesson observation system gives a good view of teaching activities but insufficient attention to the learning that it promotes. This means that teachers' use of assessment to ensure that all pupils learn cannot always be effectively monitored. However, the lesson observation system has identified a number of training needs and these have been provided for, where necessary. Examples include assessment, aspects of literacy and numeracy, and provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The school is taking significant steps to improve communications with parents and carers, and their involvement with the school. Regular meetings are now held with parents and carers, including those that discuss pupil progress. Updating sessions for parents and carers are also offered, for example on how to help their child or how to develop their reading skills. Those parents and carers interviewed talk highly of their children's experiences of the school.

External support

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The local authority has provided support in writing and English, as well as in mathematics. Training and moderation of assessment has been extensive. Support has also been given to governors.

Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- develop a lesson observation system that gives the school sufficient detail on how well pupils are learning in class so that this information can be used to help structure teaching
- ensure that governors effectively monitor the progress of the school towards targets, and that independent challenge is made to performance.