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16 July 2008

Mrs Denise McClellan
Acting Headteacher
Wingrave Church of England Combined School
Twelve Leys
Wingrave
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HP22 4QG

Dear Mrs McClellan

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WINGRAVE CHURCH OF ENGLAND COMBINED SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2008. 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. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Divisional Manager for School Improvement at Buckinghamshire Council and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF WINGRAVE CHURCH OF ENGLAND COMBINED SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 1 and 2 July 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and spoke to the acting headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, the chair and vice-chair of governors, a representative from the local authority, a representative from the Diocese, teachers and support staff.

Context

A recently retired experienced headteacher joined the school as interim headteacher shortly after the school was placed in special measures. Since the resignation of the headteacher at the end of June, she has taken on the role of acting headteacher until a substantive headteacher is in post. Experienced teachers have been appointed for next term to enable all pupils to be taught in single age classes.

Achievement and standards

The school's records and pupils' work indicate improved standards since the inspection. However, they show that attainment in science lags behind that in English and mathematics. Emerging improvements in pupils' progress noted in the inspection have continued. In some cases, pupils have made particularly good progress this year. Evidence from monitoring records shows improved progress in lessons overall, but this is variable. There remain a few lessons in which some pupils make insufficient progress. On some occasions these are the most able pupils and, at other times, it is because pupils are not clear about what they are expected to do.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Raise standards and increase the progress made in lessons, especially in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils enjoy school and work hard in lessons. They collaborate well in pairs and groups when given the opportunity.

Quality of provision

Pupils enjoy their lessons and participate fully in them. The care teachers show for their pupils and the desire for them to do well are evident in lessons. Pupils say their teachers are very helpful, and explain things if they are stuck. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Since the last inspection, teaching has been planned more effectively to challenge and engage pupils with work suitable for their needs and interests. A range of activities is often provided for different groups of pupils.

This challenges many of them, but sometimes the explanation and development of the task do not make the best of the materials, so some pupils do not gain the access they need or others are prompted too much. Sometimes the work itself is not challenging enough. Teachers use more information than at the last inspection about difficulties pupils have had with their work or a test to help individuals or groups and to prepare future lessons for the class. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who may be falling behind, are benefiting from increasingly well targeted support. Pupils are given more interesting work and some say they regularly take part in pair and group activities. Reading books are much better matched to children's needs. One parent said, 'My daughter's reading has moved on rapidly, she is now much more motivated'. Homework is now more effective. It is more consistently set and marked.

Many pupils find aspects of mathematics lessons too easy and some science work too hard, especially where concepts or activities are insufficiently well explained. Teachers say they would welcome additional support in science.

Pupils know the National Curriculum levels they are working at in English, mathematics and science, although younger ones are not clear about their target for the end of the key stage. Parents welcome the greater information about attainment levels and recent progress that they were given at parents' evening. Pupils have in their books a set of targets for a level in each of the core subjects which teachers assess them on. However, targets are not used consistently to challenge pupils, involve them in self-assessment or inform their parents. Whilst pupils often make summary judgements of whether they have understood the work in a lesson, they are not always informed well enough to make reliable judgements or know how this relates to their overall progress through the levels.

Pupils and parents say they are getting better written feedback on pupils' work, and in some cases this gives clear guidance to help pupils improve, which they follow up well in written dialogue with their teacher. However, much marking focuses on praise and misses opportunities to take learning further.

The school has introduced a new computerised system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress to inform intervention, and recognised that some of the data on past performance was not reliable. It has rightly identified the need for increased consistency in judging attainment to enable less reliance on tests.

There are some minor safeguarding issues for the school to address.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Ensure that teachers set suitably challenging tasks matched to pupils' needs – satisfactory
- Use information on pupils' academic progress more effectively to improve teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher is working well with staff, governors and parents to move the school forward. There is a clear sense of team work and positive drive. Staff

understand the need for the school's rapid improvement and are committed to it. One member of staff said, 'We all pull together now'. The acting headteacher has put essential systems and structures in place. The two key stage leaders have provided continuity well.

Leaders and managers, including governors, are more aware of what their roles entail and have begun to carry them out more fully. Self-evaluation is accurate, involves senior leaders and governors, and has identified appropriate initial actions that have subsequently taken place. Now that the acting headteacher knows the school better, a further action plan is needed with more focused sequences of actions and success criteria expressed more sharply in terms of impact with target dates.

The acting headteacher has monitored lessons assiduously and accurately. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning, and has used them to bring about improvement. Nevertheless, teachers are not used to evaluating pupils' overall progress in lessons or working consistently on shared criteria for improving it. Staff have recently broadened their role through monitoring each other's pupils' work, but leaders do not carry out a systematic lesson observation programme.

Through training, governors have informed themselves well about their role and what they need to do to secure improvement. They have actively shared responsibility for priorities in the action plan, and have arranged to monitor progress through working groups. They are aware of the need to collect first hand evidence of impact and are poised to do so.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2008:

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels are aware of and carry out their roles and responsibilities, particularly in raising standards, effectively – satisfactory

External support

The local authority's rapid appointment of an appropriate acting headteacher has enabled the school to move forward. The local authority has also provided officer and consultant support for the school and training for governors, which have contributed to improvement. This support was outlined in its statement of action, which meets requirements. Now that the circumstances of the school are clearer, there is a need for the planned update to specify the quantity, timing, focus and expected impact of future support, and ensure frequent first hand evaluation.