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9 January 2009

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

Dear Mrs McClellan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wingrave Church of England Combined School

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 December 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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

Gillian Close
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Wingrave Church of England Combined School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 December 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, and teachers.

Context

A headteacher has been appointed to take up post in the summer term. New appointments enable Years 5 and 6 to be taught as separate classes and provide shared teaching of Year 1. Revised leadership and management responsibilities include a new science coordinator who joined the school this term. Personal development and well-being were not evaluated during this visit.

Achievement and standards

Standards are rising. In 2008, attainment rose in the Foundation Stage. At Key Stage 1, the results show that attainment rose in mathematics, where the school's targets were met. Standards rose slightly in writing although targets were not met. In reading, standards fell slightly with one target met and another missed. The school's results for Key Stage 2 show a substantial rise in science standards, where targets were exceeded. This also represented an improvement in pupils' progress in science. The increased number of science lessons on the timetable and the greater emphasis on investigations contributed to it. The Key Stage 2 results rose slightly in mathematics and were maintained in English.

The school's records from monitoring lessons show that pupils' progress during lessons continues to improve. One aspect of this improvement is that no lessons this term were judged to be inadequate. The monitoring also identified a number of lessons in which some pupils made less progress than they should have, in particular some higher and lower attainers. The school's new assessment system shows that most Year 3, 4 and 6 pupils are making at least expected progress during Key Stage 2. It revealed that too many Year 5 pupils had previously made less than expected progress since Key Stage 1, particularly in writing and mathematics. The school has taken appropriate steps and progress is now improving.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Quality of provision

Pupils report that they find work more challenging this term, but that there are still times when parts of the work are too easy for some of them. Use of time in lessons has improved with less time allocated to listening at the beginning and more for pupils to spend on individual or group work. Sometimes the introductions are still too long and do not stretch everyone. Work in science is more active; pupils find this more interesting and more demanding than previously.

The school has recently introduced a number of appropriate new procedures but it is too soon to evaluate their impact.

Use of the assessment and tracking system is improving. Drawing on a range of evidence rather than just on test results, teachers have this term made their first judgements of pupils' levels in English and mathematics. Training by the local authority has assisted them with this and, as a result, their assessment skills are increasing in these subject areas. In science, assessments have not been made. Appropriately demanding expectations have been set and the tracking system is used effectively to identify where progress falls below them. However, until the tracked information includes more than one set of reliable attainment data for each pupil, their progress, both recent and throughout the key stage, cannot be evaluated from it. Pupils know the National Curriculum levels they are achieving from reports and tests although they do not have a broader overview of the requirements of the next level or of how their targets contribute to achieving them.

The first pupil progress meetings have taken place for each class. Staff discussed each pupil's progress and identified key areas for development for those who were not doing well enough. Teachers are building into their planning some support to address these areas, but systematic methods for following them up and for tracking the impact on progress each term have not been developed. National Curriculum levels are not recorded on lesson plans to show the degree of challenge of the expectations for different groups of pupils.

Pupils have recently been given individual targets in English and mathematics that they find helpful in focusing some of their work. There is differing use of them, and of class targets, for pupils to assess their own learning. Sometimes the targets are not pertinent to the current work so cannot be used by pupils or teachers. Parents welcome the information provided in these initial targets but it is early days to evaluate how effectively they are updated and contribute to pupils' progress.

Pupils continue to make an overall assessment of how well they have done in a lesson although this is not reliably informed by robust success criteria. The marking system has been tightened up and pupils receive more helpful feedback. There are generally suitable arrangements for them to follow this up until they are successful.

Teachers' skills in enhancing pupils' progress through guided reading are developing, with the help of some recent support from the local authority.

The minor safeguarding issue identified at the previous visit has been addressed appropriately. Procedures for checking for criminal records are secure.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 has successfully drawn together the staff, who report stronger morale and team spirit. These are underpinning improvements for the pupils. Changes in staffing have also improved teaching quality. The senior management team is developing effectively towards providing continuity when the new headteacher takes up her post. Its members evaluate lessons accurately and identify appropriate areas for development. Both this and monitoring by the acting headteacher have led to improvements in teaching, and the school recognises the need for greater consistency of quality. It has devised a sheet for keeping a more focused track of support and improvement in the identified areas for development. Leaders and managers, together with the local authority, have contributed to the satisfactory progress made since the last visit on the areas for improvement.

Support and development in English and mathematics have played a part in the improvements in teaching and assessment in these areas, but not their strategic leadership. In science, there has been less effective support. The coordinator has made some analysis of needs as a result of which she has identified new approaches and the need to develop assessment skills in science throughout the school. Roles in other subjects have been clarified through generic job descriptions but are less well developed.

The quality of governance has continued to make substantial strides forward. The school has developed a more detailed action plan, with success criteria expressed more sharply in terms of impact. Governors have revised their committee structure to facilitate monitoring of progress in each area of this action plan. Through improved links with the school and increased awareness of their roles, they have sharpened their challenge when monitoring it. They have begun to collect first-hand evidence from visits to probe the impact of these actions. Governors have carried out a very thorough appointment process to secure the new headteacher.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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

Staff have found training and support provided by the local authority helpful in areas of teaching and assessment. The school has moved forward as a result of them. There has been too little support for science this term to develop its leadership and management quickly enough.

The local authority has carried out the planned update of its statement of action to provide detailed actions for each term of the current school year. However, the nature and amount of support is not always clear. Flexibility has been used soundly, for example, to support the attendance of the School Improvement Partner at pupil progress meetings which were introduced this term. The local authority has plans to address an overlap in support and monitoring roles by deploying additional personnel next term.