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21 October 2008

Mrs S Smith
The Headteacher
St Michael's C of E Aided Primary
Back Lane
Aldbourne
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Wiltshire
SN8 2BP

Dear Mrs Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Michael's C of E Aided Primary

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 October 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2007. 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 – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications. Given the size of the school it has the capacity to support one newly qualified teacher.

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 Director for Children and Education for Wiltshire County Council and the Director for Education for the Diocese of Salisbury.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Pyner". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert Pyner, Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Michael's C of E Aided Primary

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 October 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed three lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, teaching staff, the chair of governors' evaluation committee and a representative of the local authority (LA). The inspector also talked with pupils during the lessons observed and informally at lunchtimes and breaks.

Context

The number of classes has reduced from September and there are now five class groups. Three of these have mixed age groups and there are single age classes for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. At the beginning of this term three teachers joined the staff.

Achievement and standards

The effective assessment tracking procedures are now well embedded within the school and the system is used well to monitor the progress made by individual pupils in each of the six terms. Pupil progress meetings with the headteacher each term ensure that teachers are accountable for assessing progress and planning the next steps in learning for individuals and groups within their classes. These systems have been instrumental in the improved results in 2008. The Year 2 results show the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in reading, writing and science is above the national average, and in mathematics it is in line. Results at the higher level are above average with a particularly strong performance in science. The unvalidated results for Year 6 in 2008 show a clear improvement over the previous year. English is above average at the expected level and, within this, there is a stronger performance in reading than writing but with both above average. Attainment in mathematics and in science is well above average. At the higher level attainment is below average in English and mathematics but very strong in science. These results are in line with the school's tracking data. Overall, this improvement in attainment reflects the effective development of focused teaching based on thorough and regular assessment of individual pupil progress.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- improve pupils' progress and raise standards in all subjects, particularly mathematics and science – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school, are friendly, and always prepared to talk positively about their life in the school community. Their behaviour and attitudes are good. Relationships with adults and

other pupils are a strength and contribute well to the family atmosphere of the school. In a literacy lesson observed, Year 4 pupils were eager to share their ideas on the content of a conversation between two characters from their topic on the Second World War. They participated well in discussions, taking turns and listening to each other. Children in the Reception class know that fruit and vegetables are healthy foods and participate sensibly at snack time showing cooperation and good manners.

Quality of provision

The new members of staff have settled quickly into the routines of the school and bring a variety of experience to develop the school's provision. Their effective induction has been enhanced by the support of senior staff who have a thorough understanding of the school's monitoring and tracking systems together with a commitment to build on the improvements of the last two years. The regular cycle for monitoring teaching by the headteacher and senior staff has continued, as has the programme for the scrutiny of work. This has further supported new staff in developing understanding and use of the school's systems for measuring achievement and for planning further challenging targets for individual pupils and groups. Lessons observed showed effective examples of subject knowledge by teachers and appropriate pace in lessons ensured pupils were engaged on tasks set. There were some very good examples of paired work with, for example, Year 3 pupils being able to explain how to add two numbers and then count on to make a hundred using a number line. Good use was made of practical activities and in one lesson very effective cross-curricular links with a history topic developed thinking and understanding well. However, there is still some work to be done to ensure that new staff are fully familiar with school systems and use them consistently in order to improve outcomes further.

The headteacher and staff continue to use the school's effective system for tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This system, including refinements, is now in its third year of operation and embedded in the life of the school. It has been successfully used to highlight and focus resources on weaker areas in subjects and the improvement in the unvalidated Year 6 results in 2008 demonstrates that the system is now having a clear impact on outcomes. The challenge for the school is to ensure now that all staff, including new teachers, continue to build on this progress and improve achievement further.

The quality of marking has improved well since the last monitoring inspection. There are examples of excellent marking of work which is positive and establishes a dialogue with individual pupils. This helps the pupils to develop a clear understanding of the next steps to undertake in order to improve their work. New staff have, by and large, taken on board the school's system for evaluating work and have been well supported in this by senior staff, although there are still some issues of consistency which the school is working on. It is evident that this area remains a focus for the school but there has been good progress with some lively approaches being developed to enable pupils to self assess their work. This provides effective

feedback for teachers which they use to develop their planning in order to match activities to pupils' needs.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- make sure that teaching is closely matched to all pupils' needs and that all teachers have high enough expectations of the standards pupils are capable of attaining – satisfactory
- ensure that regular and frequent checks are made on pupils' attainment and progress – satisfactory
- provide pupils with clear guidance on what they are doing well and how they can improve their performance – good.

Leadership and management

The commitment to improve provision and raise achievement continues to be very evident in the school at all levels. The headteacher, supported by the governors, continues to lead the school well and her evaluation of the work of the school remains robust and accurate. The improved results from the 2008 end of key stage assessments show that the groundwork undertaken earlier is beginning to be seen in improved outcomes. Governors continue to monitor improvements well through the evaluation committee. However, all at the school recognise that there is still much more work to do to build on the recent improved results. In order to achieve this, systems for monitoring the impact of teaching and the curriculum must continue with the same rigour and focus. This being said, the systems in place are embedded and with the support of senior staff the indications are that new teachers have quickly begun to use the systems appropriately.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' progress and take swift action for improvement – satisfactory.

External support

Since the last monitoring visit a new advisory headteacher has been appointed to support the school. The effective handover procedures ensured that the local authority has continued to provide a good level of support. This support is now focused appropriately on monitoring as the school's self-evaluation increasingly becomes the main driver for improvement. Discussions are correctly beginning to focus on the levels and areas of support required by the school when it is removed from a category of concern.

Priorities for further improvement

No specific further priorities were identified.