

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 947
Direct F 01695 729 320
sdaly@cfbt.com



23 March 2009

Mrs Beverley Cordle
Headteacher
Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School
St Margaret Avenue
Deepcar
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S36 2TE

Dear Mrs Cordle

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School

Following my visit with Jane Hughes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 March 2009, 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 October 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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, the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield and the Diocese of Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Linda Murphy
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and three representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the school became subject to special measures two temporary teachers have been appointed. The local authority has recently seconded a senior teacher to the school for two days each week. The deputy headteacher has been absent since December 2008 and during this monitoring inspection two other teachers were also absent.

Achievement and standards

Standards at the end of Year 6 were broadly average in 2007 and 2008. This was despite pupils entering Year 3 with standards at least above the national average. Observations in lessons, analysis of pupils' work and scrutiny of data reveal that pupils' progress is too slow and, as a result, gaps remain between the standards pupils achieve and what they are capable of attaining. New systems are not used consistently and have not had time to impact sufficiently on increasing pupils' basic knowledge, understanding and skills. Weaknesses persist in particular in writing and problem solving in mathematics and science. The progress of the less able pupils and those capable of attaining highly is also too slow. This is because their precise needs are not sufficiently well planned for.

Progress since the inspection in October 2008 on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement across the school – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils generally enjoy school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They interact harmoniously in lessons and around the school. Playtimes are safe and pupils confirm that everyone is friendly. In lessons, pupils respond particularly well in discussions which help them to consolidate their learning. Pupils understand the school rules and delight in winning class rewards for good effort in lessons. Nonetheless, many pupils remain passive during lessons. They often do not readily volunteer information or immerse themselves in their learning and this slows the progress they make.

Quality of provision

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has established a more reliable and workable assessment system. However, only the headteacher has the overview of how the system works and currently completes the majority of the work in entering and analysing data. This is very time consuming and can deflect from tackling other pressing leadership issues. Assessments of pupils' attainment are not yet accurate enough. Nevertheless, as a result of the opportunities teachers have had in assessing the levels pupils attain, they are growing in confidence in their assessments of what pupils can do.

Although teachers mark pupils' work regularly, the quality of feedback is variable. Comments are frequently purely celebratory rather than developmental. The most effective marking highlights what pupils do well and what they need to do next to improve their work. However, there is little evidence in pupils' books to show that they regularly try to incorporate marking guidance into subsequent work.

The quality of teaching and learning remains inconsistent and is not as good as the school judges. However, training is starting to improve teachers' skills and staff are eager to refine their classroom practice. A start has been made on agreeing a policy on what a good lesson should look like in order to achieve a more consistently high level of pupils' learning.

Several significant flaws remain in too many lessons. These include a lack of challenge for the more able pupils, insufficient urgency among some staff and many pupils in terms of moving learning along quickly, and frequent poor use of time. Pupils are often overly passive learners. In several lessons many pupils were happy to sit back and let others do all the hard work: some not even using the useful classroom displays set up to help their independence. This is a key barrier to learning and one that teachers are working hard to overcome.

Teaching assistants work well alongside class teachers and provide support in lessons to pupils primarily with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They also provide additional challenge to some groups of more able pupils who blossom in these lessons. The targets set in the individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are often too broad. They do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to make measurable, small steps in their progress and are not clearly linked to lesson planning.

Learning environments vary greatly in quality. The best provide bright, colourful and orderly spaces in which it is a pleasure to learn. Less successful spaces are cluttered, with too few attractive areas to entice pupils to settle down and do some private reading.

Lesson planning is improving and teachers are beginning to use the newly collected data to match better the work they set to pupils' needs. However, lingering inaccuracies in assessments continue to result in lessons where pupils are expected to tackle work that presents inappropriate levels of challenge. When this happens, pupils either coast through activities which are too easy, or alternatively, struggle with work that is too hard. Either way, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Progress since the inspection in October 2008 on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that assessments made of the standards pupils are reaching and the progress they are making are accurate and that the information is used to provide effective academic support and guidance – inadequate.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so it enables all pupils to learn effectively – inadequate.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is successfully raising staff morale and establishing a shared commitment to school improvement. Performance management has been introduced for teaching staff and the headteacher has used her expertise to establish better arrangements for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Leadership is impeded, however, through a lack of senior post holders to share the workload. The headteacher, relatively new to headship, is working without the support of a deputy headteacher or leaders for assessment and special educational needs. This situation is untenable and is slowing down the rate of change. At middle management level, subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, although keen to do well, are inexperienced and require guidance.

The recently appointed and inexperienced chair of governors is encouraging others to develop professionally and also to ensure succession planning for the exacting role of chair so that in the future others are prepared for the 'workload and the depth and range of knowledge for this role', which the present chair has willingly taken on but with little preparation. Links made between governors and core subject leaders are at an early stage. The termly raising attainment plan does not include contributions by the governing body or all the areas for development identified at the inspection in October 2008. The management systems to evaluate progress are weak.

Progress since the inspection in October 2008 on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that all leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school and that they play a full part in improving it – inadequate.

External support

The local authority has amended its plan of external support for the school which is now fit for purpose. A range of support and training has been put in place. The school improvement advisor is working closely with the school. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science are benefiting from training and working alongside the local authority consultants. Initial monitoring of work scrutiny and lesson planning is helping to plan the next step. The role of a seconded teacher for two days each week is unclear as to whether that teacher's support should be targeted to Year 6 classrooms or used to assist leadership.

Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities for further improvement continue to be those identified at the school's inspection in October 2008.