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13 July 2009

Mrs Heather Good
The Acting Headteacher
Knights Templar Church of England/Methodist Community School
Liddymore Road
Watchet
Somerset
TA23 0EX

Dear Mrs Good

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Knights Templar Church of England/Methodist Community School

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 July 2009, 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 November 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 – good.

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 Somerset, the Director of Education of the Diocese of Bath and Wells and the Assistant Education Secretary, Methodist Church Schools.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Knights Templar Church of England/Methodist Community School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 July 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of relevant documents and samples of pupils' work, and met with the acting headteacher, the chair of governors, senior teaching staff, a school improvement adviser from the local authority and a group of pupils.

Context

Following a period when the assistant headteacher took on the role of acting headteacher, an experienced headteacher is now leading and managing the school until July 2010. The assistant headteacher will retire shortly and a member of staff has been appointed to an acting role from September 2009. The school will then be organised in six classes rather than seven.

Achievement and standards

The pace of the progress made by the oldest pupils has accelerated as a result of improvements in teaching. The use of targets for individual pupils is having an increasing impact on the development of their skills as teachers grow in confidence in making assessments of what pupils know, understand and can do. Progress is carefully tracked and how well individual pupils are doing is the focus of detailed discussions between the acting headteacher and the class teachers. The school's data show that progress in Year 4 has improved significantly compared with that made by Year 4 pupils in 2007 to 2008, who achieved broadly similar standards to current pupils at the end of Year 2. However, the standards pupils have reached remain below expected levels as there has been insufficient time to address fully the earlier gaps in their learning, particularly in mathematics where some lack the skills to draw confidently on a range of possible strategies when tackling mathematical problems.

The school's data show that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are reaching higher standards than those attained in 2008 and pupils in Years 1 and 2 continue to make good progress as a result of good teaching.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve pupils' standards, particularly in numeracy in Years 3 and 4 – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being remain strengths of the school. Pupils behave well, like school and enjoy their lessons. Several reported being pleased with 'the way teachers go over work to make sure we understand it' and were particularly appreciative of being given targets in English and mathematics as 'it improves our work'. Pupils also praised the wider range of ways in which they can take on responsibilities to contribute to the day-to-day running of the school and appreciated that these extend beyond Year 4. Pupils report they feel safe in school and are confident that the school provides plenty of encouragement for them to eat healthily and to exercise. Some said that they would like teachers to push them more on occasion to produce their best work.

Quality of provision

Teaching in Years 3 and 4 is improving as a result of the concerted efforts of the acting headteacher and her staff with the support of consultants from the local authority. A programme of lesson observations carried out by the acting headteacher, joined on two occasions by the local authority school improvement adviser, resulted in a clear picture of the quality of teaching, with identified strengths and areas for development. Staff meetings have been used to improve teachers' knowledge and skills and local authority consultants have made an important contribution to improving teaching. They have held 'surgeries' for individual staff, where aspects of teaching and learning were discussed, worked with small groups of pupils with the teacher observing and taught demonstration lessons. Consultants have also helped to set targets for English and mathematics and supported the subject leaders in establishing standards which teachers will use when marking pupils' work.

The school's lesson observations and those carried out on this inspection show that teachers have responded well to these opportunities. Activities are often well planned and purposeful games are sometimes used to develop and consolidate pupils' understanding in mathematics. Targets are frequently emphasised by teachers and feature in effective classroom displays which include practical material to support learning. Teachers are very willing to reflect on what has gone well, and not so well, in lessons and are keen to develop their practice. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and their relationships with staff and their peers remain good. Where lessons are less effective, the pace sometimes slows and planned activities can be too easy. There has been improvement in sessions at the end of lessons to consolidate pupils' learning, but on occasion these do not refer effectively enough to learning objectives.

The hours of teaching assistants have been reorganised and their role has become more sharply focused as 'teaching and learning assistants'. In lessons observed, these staff made a significant contribution to supporting and assessing pupils' learning, particularly when working with individuals or groups.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Years 3 and 4 – good.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher, who has been leading and managing the school since the start of the summer term, wisely spent time establishing a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development, observing and interviewing all staff. She has made a significant contribution to the good progress the school is now making. Clear direction has been provided through a detailed and focused action plan which is a working tool for the improvement of the school. The senior leadership team has been reshaped and an acting assistant headteacher appointed for 2009-10 with a clearly defined role linked to the school's key priorities. Releasing the potential of the subject leaders in the school has correctly been identified as a priority to strengthen leadership at all levels and a good start has been made. The governors appreciate the information about the school's progress with which they are provided as it enables them to build a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They have undertaken one training session, with more to follow shortly, in order to help them in carrying out their role of checking progress with the action plan and holding the school to account.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of strategic planning to focus rigorously on rapidly improving pupils' progress – good.

External support

The local authority has revised its action plan appropriately to take account of the new circumstances of the school and provided good support. The school improvement adviser has joined the acting headteacher to conduct joint lesson observations as part of the programme to promote and monitor improvements in teaching and learning. She is also supporting the governing body with practical guidance in the early stages of its procedures for appointing a permanent headteacher. Local authority consultants for numeracy and literacy and the Foundation Stage adviser have worked with school staff in a wide range of ways to help to evaluate practice and to bring about improvement.