

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 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

9 December 2009

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

Dear Mrs Cordle

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

Following my visit with Rosemary Eaton, additional inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 December 2009 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield and the Diocese of Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Fiona Gowers
Lead Inspector



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

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 December 2009

Evidence

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

Context

A full-time, temporary deputy headteacher continues to be seconded from the local authority. A lead headteacher continues to work with the school on occasion, although not on such a regular basis as previously. A 'Steering Group' has been established, with representatives from the governors, school leadership and the local authority, to assist with monitoring the effectiveness of the school's work.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The most recent unvalidated national test data show standards are rising in reading, mathematics and science and more pupils reached their targets at the end of Year 6, than in the previous year. However, standards in pupils' writing have not risen to the same extent. In particular, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in writing declined. In response, the school has adopted a more focused approach to the teaching of writing. There has been a degree of success and the quality and content of pupils' written work is improving in some classes. Pupils continue to work hard in lessons and there are signs of improved rates of progress in many classes. However, this is not the case throughout school. This is because learning activities are not always well matched to the range of pupils' needs and interests.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- raise standards and improve achievement across the school – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to behave well and they enjoy their time at school, as shown by their above average attendance. A wider variety of learning activities are included in many lessons, which enable pupils to take a more active part in their learning. In particular, pupils say the school's new approach to teaching reading successfully encourages them to read a wider range of books.



The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is continuing to improve. Consistently used strategies have been adopted, which are generally helping to improve the structure and pace of lessons. The school has increased the accuracy of its assessments of pupils' work, through staff training. A recent development has been a more rigorous assessment of the quality of pupils' written work to identify 'gaps' in pupils' knowledge and skills. Where teaching is now most effective the information gained is used to target work more closely to address any gaps in learning or misunderstandings pupils may have. This is helping pupils in some classes make faster progress. However inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. Learning activities in some lessons are not pitched at an appropriate level for all groups of pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

Systems to improve the quality of marking and to provide more detailed academic guidance have been implemented since the last visit. However, their effectiveness varies. Although some pupils have a clearer view of how well they are doing and how to improve their work further, other pupils reported they would like to be reminded of their targets for improvement more regularly.

Progress since the last visit 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 – satisfactory
- improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that it enables all pupils to learn effectively - satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, leaders at all levels are developing a more accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school. Following a careful diagnosis of the school's areas for improvement, leadership is now more focussed on the longer term strategic view of school development. The school's raising attainment plan continues to focus on appropriate priorities and some success is evident. In addition, the learning environment in school has been enhanced. The quality of classroom displays has been improved and all rooms have been redecorated and some refurbished. This is having a significant impact on the well-being of pupils and staff alike. More rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress means school leaders are now able to identify more quickly those pupils who are not making enough progress and to provide additional support for them. Staff are being held to account more as school leaders rigorously check that all staff are implementing the new procedures. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of these measures and there remains a way to go to achieve the accelerated rates of progress in all classes that pupils need to regain lost ground.



Strategies to improve teaching and learning are becoming more established and now include more specific support and coaching plans. The roles of subject leaders are developing. In particular, the mathematics and English subject leaders have been involved in improving the school curriculum, to help to ensure that pupils build more systematically on their skills as they move through the school. Staff are growing in confidence and working closely with local authority consultants to enable them to play a greater part in school improvement initiatives. Governors are gaining a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. In particular, the development of the 'Steering Group' is helping governors develop the skills to more effectively question the school and monitor the success of school improvement initiatives.

Progress since the last visit in 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 - satisfactory

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support and successfully engages school leaders and governors in evaluating the school's progress. Local authority reports show an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. School leaders are increasingly taking the lead in the school improvement drive and are now more often setting the agenda for focussed support. In addition the Diocese continues to secure the services of a mentor who is supporting the work of the governors.

Priorities for further improvement

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