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Mrs Lara Furmidge  
Crockerne Church of England Primary School  
Westward Drive  
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Dear Mrs Furmidge

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Crockerne Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Charlotte Roberson, additional inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 February, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

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 the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Somerset and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Yours sincerely

Wiola Hola  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Crockerne Church of England Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 February 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 12 lessons or parts of lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' written work, and met with the headteacher and senior staff, a group of staff, three governors and two representatives from the local authority. They talked with pupils in lessons and at break times.

## Context

The school is largely unchanged since October 2009. The number on roll is currently 263, including 38 in the Nursery; this is a little higher than the 252 in October 2009. The two mixed-age classes for pupils in Years 3 and 4 have been taught by supply teachers for several weeks to cover for teachers absent on sick leave. The children's centre on the school's site is not being looked at as part of these monitoring visits. The breakfast club, run by the school, was not seen on this occasion.

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

Progress as seen in lessons, in pupils' work, and in the school's own assessment records, still shows considerable variation between classes and year groups. Pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 is secure but patchy elsewhere. Pupils currently in Year 4 are not, in the main, working at expected levels, and this reflects discontinuities in teaching experienced. Pupils enjoy their work in many lessons and are mostly keen to please and succeed. They speak positively about being at the school and cite activities that are great fun.

The results of national tests in recent years in both Year 2 and Year 6 have been broadly average, although the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected level in mathematics in 2009 was significantly lower than average. In 2009, the Year 6 pupils as a whole made satisfactory progress over Years 2 to 6; lower attaining pupils generally made expected progress but many middle and higher attaining pupils did not.

Work to raise standards and boost progress stalled for a while after the inspection and has got going again since the start of January. While several useful initiatives and strategies have been devised or enhanced, their impact on outcomes for pupils is not yet discernible. An exception is in relation to good work being done to help pupils shape their writing so that text flows in an increasingly structured way. The quality of pupils' written work, however, still shows many weaknesses in spelling, handwriting and general presentation. Errors go uncorrected far too often. Redrafted writing to show pupils' best and polished work is rare. Some pupils are producing



writing that is in line with what can be expected for their ages but too many are not. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are mostly good because teachers encourage pupils to talk about their ideas with each other in pairs or groups or with the whole class. Pupils' skills in mathematics are generally being developed systematically in numeracy lessons but opportunities are being missed to use the skills in practical applications throughout the curriculum. Senior staff report there is work to be done to support pupils in developing their skills in mental mathematics.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils' 'learning books' that contain written work in subjects other than English and mathematics generally show thin coverage except for science in Years 5 and 6. Displays around the school include some work in art, and design and technology, but rather little. Singing in the whole school assembly was sweet and tuneful. Pupils say they use the computer suite infrequently. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) will be explored in the next visit.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

This is an orderly school and pupils clearly feel comfortable in it. Pupils are courteous and friendly. Relationships in lessons and at break times are warm and supportive between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves. There have been no exclusions in the last year. Only occasionally does pupils' concentration drift, and this is linked to the activities set, and to the clarity with which the teacher has explained what pupils are required to do. Based on one science lesson seen, and on conversations with some pupils at lunchtime, pupils appear to have a good understanding about healthy eating. Class timetables show less than the recommended two hours a week for physical education in several cases; pupils' physical activity will be explored in a future visit.

#### The effectiveness of provision

Plans for improving teaching and the curriculum are being constructed, and some actions have already been taken. Inspectors on this visit found a similar picture to that pertaining last October. Some good teaching was seen but also some that included shortcomings with an ensuing negative impact on pupils' progress.

Work on seeking to match more closely the activities provided for pupils to their specific needs is beginning to bear fruit. For example, more able pupils in Year 2 are given extra challenge in mathematics. Some teachers are adept at determining if and which pupils are grasping new material, can spot misconceptions, and adjust the lesson as necessary. Others do not routinely use good questioning or other means to do this. Good practice in such day-to-day assessment was seen, for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 and in a mathematics lesson in Year 5. Teachers are using a new format for planning lessons and say this is helpful. They also welcome the new procedures for assessment and see these as having the potential to secure progression in pupils' learning. Staff appreciate the need for



providing pupils with greater challenge. One teaching assistant said, 'I have increased my expectations of what the pupils can do and pupils are rising to them.'

Pupils are not always well enough informed about their progress. Marking in pupils' books, especially in Years 3 to 6, is too variable in quality. It is sometimes very cursory, and occasionally includes mistakes as well. A new marking policy has been introduced recently.

Concerning the curriculum, some changes have been made to medium and longer term plans. Time allocations to subjects are being reconsidered. The organisation and teaching of core subjects in Years 5 and 6 is being reviewed. Pupils are enjoying the recently introduced 'critical skills challenges'. The curriculum does not yet include enough opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT across all subjects. The school is experiencing problems with resources for ICT; existing computers are felt to be unreliable. One inspector saw the computer suite being used effectively for a French lesson. Pupils speak about the clubs and other enrichment activities they enjoy. The school's work in providing personal care, guidance and support was not explored fully on this visit.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that teaching is closely matched to all pupils' needs in Years 2 to 6 in order to accelerate their progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
  - using ongoing assessment to pitch tasks at the right level of challenge for different groups of pupils and to respond to pupils' needs in whole-class sessions
  - providing all pupils with clear feedback on what they are doing well and guidance on how to improve their performance.

satisfactory progress

- Make sure that the curriculum promotes effective progress by:
  - consistently building pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills from year to year and within each year
  - providing good opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills in writing and mathematics across different subjects.

satisfactory progress

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior staff and governors realise action must now be swift to ensure any pupils who have lost ground are helped to catch up. They are working to set out a clear path forward. Staff are aware of the main initiatives for school improvement but more detailed plans have yet to be shared with them so they know exactly what part they are each to play. The school has some existing plans, as well as the new ones being



devised. It is also using the support plan developed by the local authority. Some plans are very clear; others are not, and the question, 'How are we going to tell if our actions have worked?' will not be easily answered without further definition.

Some good work, led by the deputy headteacher, has taken place on revising assessment arrangements and the way data on pupils' attainment are recorded and analysed. Teachers have collections of data showing pupils' current and expected levels of attainment although the validity of the data has yet to be fully checked. Class teachers and senior staff meet periodically to review pupils' progress, and hence also the effectiveness of teaching and other aspects of educational provision. A schedule of lesson observations has been set up. The notes made following the observations are helpful in many respects but do not routinely focus enough on how much pupils are actually learning and whether this is enough. All of these arrangements have still to be tested for their effectiveness in raising standards.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Drive improvement and embed ambition by:
    - rigorously evaluating the impact of provision, particularly teaching, on pupils' progress and attainment, and taking swift action for improvement
    - holding all teachers accountable for the quality of learning in their classes.
- satisfactory progress

### External support

The local authority is helping the school raise the quality of teaching through advice from a range of advisers. Some advisers are working with the school to develop its plans for improvement and support with work on self-evaluation. The local authority has arranged for Crockerne School to work in partnership with a local junior school; this partnership is valued by Crockerne School.

The review undertaken at the start of February, by advisers from the local authority, of teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 was helpful. A similar review is planned shortly for Years 2 to 6 where the inspection report found weaknesses and where there is a greater need for support and intervention.

As yet, it is not entirely clear how the support plan devised by the local authority and the plans of the school dovetail together. The local authority is to add a bit more detail to its plans for supporting the school over curriculum development. Overall, support from the local authority is satisfactory.

### Priorities for further improvement

No further priorities are being given after this first monitoring inspection.

