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15 June 2010

Mrs Julia Hamper
Headteacher
Ducklington C of E Primary School
Aston Road
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Oxfordshire
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Dear Mrs Hamper

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ducklington C of E Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9–10 June 2010, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. 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 – good

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, Oxford Diocese, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Ducklington C of E Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9–10 June 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body, pupils, staff and a representative of the local authority. In addition, he met informally with parents, scrutinised pupils' work and observed teaching in every class.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a new teacher has taken up her post in the Early Years and Foundation Stage and a new teaching assistant has been appointed to the school. Other staffing and pupil numbers have remained stable. The school has updated its policies on safeguarding, marking, presentation and homework. Job descriptions for senior staff have been updated.

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

Overall, good progress has been made since the last visit in improving pupils' achievement. In the Early Years and Foundation Stage there has been an impressive improvement in all the areas for learning. When children started school last September attainment was average in all areas except communication, language and literacy, which was below average. At the last monitoring visit progress had been satisfactory. However, the large majority of children are now on track to achieve or exceed the expected levels by the end of the year, and this represents good progress since the last visit, especially in communication, language and literacy. In Key Stage 1 standards are also rising with almost all pupils on track to achieve the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics, although only a small percentage are expected to exceed this in writing and mathematics. Teacher assessments, confirmed by inspection evidence, suggest that standards have risen in Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics when compared with previous years. The school has exceeded its progress targets in English and mathematics by 15% and 12% respectively. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have also made better than expected progress. Effective one-to-one tuition has been a successful strategy in tackling underachievement in mathematics.

Standards of presentation of pupils' work have improved throughout the school, although the quality of handwriting in older classes remains variable. The standard of speaking and listening and reading throughout the school is good.

Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy their lessons, which was confirmed by lesson observations where high levels of pupil motivation were a consistently good feature.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They have a particularly good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and make a very positive contribution to the school and local community. Attendance remains good and effective systems are in place to monitor this. Good progress has been made in developing pupils' workplace skills, especially in literacy, numeracy, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and in speaking and listening.

The effectiveness of provision

At the last monitoring inspection, strategies had only recently been put in place to improve the quality of teaching. These have now had sufficient time to become embedded and their impact on pupils' learning and progress has been impressive. During the inspection no inadequate lessons were seen. Most of the teaching was good, with outstanding teaching observed in the oldest and youngest classes. Consistently good features include clear learning objectives and success criteria which result in higher teacher expectations of the pupils; incisive teacher questioning which accurately assesses and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding; well planned work which matches pupils' needs; good use of teaching assistants to support teaching and learning; excellent behaviour of pupils and relationships between staff and pupils. The best teaching observed was inspirational. For example, in one lesson pupils were very enthusiastic about writing a radio advertisement script for healthy living because of highly motivational and lively teaching. Less effective teaching resulted from a slackening in pace due either to pupils sitting for too long on the carpet or as a result of minor organisational oversights.

Good progress has been made throughout the school in improving the quality of marking and the involvement of pupils in assessing their own work. Written comments in English, mathematics and science are evaluative and written in child-friendly language. Pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Particularly in older classes, they are developing a written dialogue with teachers in their books and this is further developing their responsibility and involvement in assessing their own progress. Inspection evidence shows that assessment is being used well to adjust teaching in lessons and plan future lessons so that pupils' needs are accurately met. The school is currently planning how to improve the quality of end of year reports to parents and carers, and this will be evaluated at the next visit. As a result of improved teaching and assessment, attainment has improved throughout the school and progress has accelerated, particularly in English and mathematics.

The curriculum provision has been redesigned and now provides a clear, well-structured and progressive plan of what will be taught in each year group. This

effectively builds on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Although opportunities to use skills such as ICT and writing across the curriculum are more explicit, the school is rightly focusing on ensuring that there is a clear focus on the detail of skills development in teachers' planning. Overall, however, the curriculum is effectively promoting pupils' progress.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure teaching meets all pupils' needs so that their progress is accelerated and their achievement raised, particularly in mathematics and writing – good
- ensure that the curriculum promotes effective progress – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good progress has been made in ensuring that the effectiveness of strategies introduced since the inspection are driving up standards and are resulting in improved outcomes for pupils. Under the proactive and very effective leadership of the headteacher, the senior leadership of the school is more confident and secure in their roles, and new job descriptions mean that they have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is a particular strength which is illustrated by the rapid improvement in provision since the last visit, for example in the development of the inside and outside learning environment. Curriculum co-ordinators have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and although some lesson observations do not indicate improvement targets with sufficient clarity, the commitment throughout the school to rigorous monitoring and accurate evaluation is having a positive impact on raising standards.

The role of the governors has strengthened. They have a greater involvement in the strategic planning of the school, such as in curriculum development, and they are providing a suitable balance of support and challenge.

The safeguarding issues identified at the inspection have been fully resolved. The newly developed safeguarding policy is clear, detailed and fully complies with requirements. Safeguarding strategies are consistently and rigorously applied.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on areas for improvement:

- drive improvement and embed ambition by rigorously evaluating the impact of provision and ensuring that leaders are effective – good
- ensure the statutory requirements for safeguarding are met by December 2009 – good.

External support

The local authority has provided sustained and effective support since the last visit and this has helped the school make good progress in addressing all the issues identified in the inspection report. The school improvement adviser has provided very good liaison with other local authority services, and this has ensured that support has been timely and appropriate. Her role as critical friend has been greatly valued by staff and governors.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to build upon the recent improvements made in teaching and learning to ensure that their positive impact on pupils' achievement is sustained.
- Ensure that improvements planned with regard to the quality of pupils' end of year reports are put in place.