

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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Mr C Lee
Executive Headteacher
Darfield, All Saints, Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
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Dear Mr Spencer

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Darfield, All Saints, Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 January 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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 subject to the agreement of the monitoring inspector.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Diocesan Director of Education and the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families for Barnsley.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex**The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011**

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in English and mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so that it is at least good overall
 - ensuring that lessons meet each pupil's learning needs and enable them to reach the highest levels of which they are capable
 - using marking and their individual targets consistently well to inform pupils about how they can improve their work
 - providing more and better opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - developing rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work and performance
 - providing focused training so that senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body develop the skills needed to enable them to contribute fully to self-evaluation and school improvement.

- Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing a more interesting and attractive outdoor area
 - providing a better range of outdoor activities and resources to enhance opportunities across all areas of children's learning.

Special measures: monitoring of Darfield, All Saints, Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 January 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including lesson observations, one of which was conducted jointly with the acting headteacher. The inspector met key staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), the school's evaluation officer from the local authority and the executive headteacher, who is a National Leader of Education. The inspector also scrutinised pupils' work, information about pupils' achievement, attainment and progress, school improvement planning documents and met with a representative group of pupils from the school council.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit school leaders, in partnership with the local authority, have successfully resolved a long-term staffing problem. The IEB has been successful in reducing a significant deficit budget. Plans with the local authority, the Diocese, senior leaders and the IEB to secure the future governance of the school are at an advanced stage of development.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress is more accelerated in those classes where teaching and learning are consistently good or better. Pupils' work seen during lesson observation and scrutiny of the school's high quality data and assessment tracking system reveal two key improvements. First, that more pupils are on target to achieve their full potential in English and mathematics than was evident at the last inspection in March 2011. Second, progress for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 is more rapid, particularly in mathematics, where pupils' attainment is close to that achieved nationally. A similar picture is emerging for pupils' reading and writing with some compelling evidence to indicate that, for the first time in some years, a significant number of pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 are on target to achieve the higher levels. This is a result of a consistent and systematic approach to:

- planning lessons which closely match the needs of individual pupils
- effective teaching of letters and the sounds they make
- the analysis of where gaps in pupils' learning lie and a concerted effort to ensure that these are remedied quickly.

However, the school's leaders recognise that the pattern of achievement is still variable and they have appropriate plans in place to ensure all achieve equally as well.

The quality of teaching

Following a thorough analysis of individual strengths and weaknesses in teaching, senior leaders have instigated a number of effective strategies to bring about improvements. For all teachers there is an increased level of accountability through pupil progress meetings linked to the outcomes of classroom observations. The result is a stronger profile of teaching and learning throughout the school. Indeed, elements of good and occasionally outstanding teaching were observed during the inspection. A consistent planning format operates throughout the school with the opportunity for pupils' self-assessment and teacher assessment to appear alongside one another. This enables pupils to identify to the teacher what it was they did not fully understand and what they will need help with next time. Of particular note is the effective role of the teaching assistants in supporting pupils' learning. Within lessons and in smaller support groups they act as exemplary role models for handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in English and mathematics – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All attendance issues are tackled swiftly and firmly so that attendance is at least average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is on the decline. Pupils continue to enjoy their learning. They appreciate and respond appropriately to the regular positive reinforcement of good work and behaviour, which has done much to raise pupils' self-esteem and promotes good attitudes to learning.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher, acting head and the IEB provide strong and determined leadership for the school. Under their expert tutelage the school's substantive leadership team is equipped with the skills and confidence to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. This ensures that remaining elements of weaker teaching, seen when the school was inspected in March 2011, no longer feature in lessons. Subject leaders for English and mathematics are now able to identify where there are deep-seated gaps in pupils' learning. This provides valuable information for targeted support in the daily analysis intervention groups and in lessons.

A strength of the partnership with St Mary's School is the opportunity for senior leaders from both schools to work together. For example, staff work willingly in the partnership to moderate standards in English and special educational needs across the two schools. As a result, all have a thorough understanding as to what constitutes good and outstanding progress and, more importantly, where teacher expectations may in the past have been too low.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage a range of good quality opportunities are now provided for young children to take their learning to the outdoors and explore the world with greater independence. Access to the outdoors is more frequent than at the time of the last monitoring inspection in September 2011. Record-keeping and planning for supported activities as well as free-flow activities are improved. Frequent, good quality assessments of children's learning feed in to the children's learning journals, which are shared on a regular basis with the parents. Senior and Foundation Stage leaders are to develop the provision further so that children have greater opportunities to explore their learning independently.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage – good
- Improve leadership, management and governance – outstanding

External support

The local authority school evaluation officer continues to offer high quality support and is able to identify opportunities for the professional development of middle leaders. The partnership with St Mary's Primary school continues apace. While still a driving force behind improvements, guidance from their staff is ensuring increasing autonomy and independence for the substantive staff at Darfield All Saints.