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15 November 2010

Mr Bernard Gummett
Headteacher
George Hastwell School
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Walney Island
Barrow-in-Furness
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LA14 3LW

Dear Mr Gummett

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of George Hastwell School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 November 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please convey my thanks to the pupils on the school council and to the Chair and vice chair of your Governing Body, your School Improvement Partner and to the Senior School Improvement Officer for their time and comments.

Very sadly, a member of staff died in the summer term which has understandably had an impact on the staff and pupils. Since the inspection in May a teacher has also retired and, at the time of the monitoring inspection, two supply teachers were employed at the school. Ten pupils left the school at the end of the summer term and six Year 7 pupils started in September. Two other pupils are currently attending the school while they remain on the rolls of their mainstream schools. There are no pupils currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school roll stands at 79. A new governor, representing the local authority, has recently been appointed to the school.

As a result of the inspection on 12 and 13 May 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school was very unsettled by the outcome of the inspection in May as the headteacher and staff found it hard to come to terms with the judgments about

safeguarding. However, the school has put this to one side and has begun to move forward.

Effective progress has been made in establishing a more robust system to record concerns and referrals; the new system is confidential, secure and regularly monitored. On-line training in child protection, which the local authority endorses as being at the appropriate level, has been completed by the headteacher and the other two staff designated as child protection coordinators. Helpful training has been provided for all staff on managing risk and further relevant training has been accessed by the school's coordinator for educational visits. The governing body has picked up the gauntlet in more fully exercising its responsibilities for safeguarding and is now in a better position to monitor these procedures. The child protection policy has been reviewed. However, it requires one or two further adjustments for it to comply fully with guidance. The headteacher has begun to establish a system for reporting concerns to parents and carers but this is still in its infancy. Also at an early stage is the school's review of its risk assessments.

The school is moving forward soundly in setting more focused individual targets in lessons and support plans. A system of learning diaries is being piloted and this shows much promise in helping pupils appreciate their own medium-term targets and achievements. The local authority is helping the school introduce a data-management program which will allow staff to compare the progress of their pupils with similar pupils nationally. The program also enables suitably challenging targets to be set. A review of individual education plans has commenced and is demonstrating that targets in some of these plans are more sharply focused than in others. Target-setting is also an element in a project with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust which is being focused on younger pupils. Although medium-term plans are beginning to include more helpful targets, there is still work to do to include more individual specific targets in lesson plans. In the lessons observed the pupils were generally making good progress. This is because they were engaged, relationships between staff and pupils were good and the work of teaching assistants supported pupils well. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' needs. Supplementing their current lesson planning with sharper individual targets for pupils will put them in a good position to challenge pupils more and increase the rate of progress they make.

The school, supported well by the local authority, has made improvements to the provision for pupils at the Early Years Foundation Stage. The classroom has been relocated, new furniture purchased and this is being used to demark various areas of learning. A redecoration programme is soon to commence. The development of outdoor play provision for younger pupils has been informed by an early years' specialist. However, the staff and governors are still wrestling with difficulties faced in making this equipment as accessible as possible to the youngest pupils while maintaining a secure environment.

Rather than make adjustments to the school development plan to accommodate the recommendations from the last inspection, the school adopted the local authority's statement of action. Although the statement of action, which was found to be fit for purpose when assessed by Ofsted, has been helpful to the local authority in orchestrating its good support for the school, the lack of a plan compiled by the school itself has been a drawback. It has not enabled the school to prioritise its actions as well as it could or share the load in driving forward the necessary changes.

The local authority formed a school specific monitoring group for the school following the May inspection. The local authority has a lot of confidence in the school's senior leaders and has made available a range of useful support which the school has drawn upon. Senior staff have found some of this, in particular, to be helpfully challenging, including the advice about the location of outdoor play equipment. The school specific monitoring group has not yet formally reviewed progress of the statement of action because a planned meeting for this purpose was postponed as it coincided with this monitoring inspection.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Eric Craven

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010:

- Immediately take steps to ensure that safeguarding procedures are fully effective and meet all statutory requirements.
- By July 2011 enable pupils to make even better progress by setting more-focused individual targets in lessons and through support plans.
- By January 2011 ensure better opportunities for younger children by improving the accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage.