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10 December 2010

Mr Nigel Greathead
Headteacher
Manor Primary School
Beechwood Drive
Prenton
Merseyside
CH43 7ZU

Dear Mr Greathead

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Manor Primary School

Following the visit of two of Her Majesty's Inspectors to your school on 8 and 9 December 2010, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2009. 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.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in English throughout the school, particularly writing.
- Improve the quality of academic guidance so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to produce better work.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make at least satisfactory progress and continually build on their prior knowledge.
- Improve the effectiveness and knowledge of governors and subject leaders so they are able to evaluate accurately the quality of the school's provision and take steps to raise standards and achievement.

Special measures: monitoring of Manor Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspectors observed the school's work, including observation of five full and two part lessons, and conducted a visit to the Early Years Foundation Stage to observe provision; scrutinised documents, including the school's analyses on the progress and attainment of current pupils; and met with senior leaders, other members of staff, the School Improvement Partner, a senior officer from the local authority, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, a parent and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in July 2010 the school has reviewed its class structure. Of the three classes in Key Stage 2, two have mixed-age pupils and the third has Year 6 pupils taught as one age group. A member of staff has left the school and two teachers are on long-term sick leave. There is a temporary teacher, who started five weeks ago, taking the Year 3/4 class. The teacher taking the Early Years Foundation Stage class is the same as at the last visit, although she takes the class from Monday through to Friday. One teacher has returned from long-term sick leave but on the days of the visit she was on sick leave and a supply teacher was taking the Year 4/5 class.

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

Pupils enjoy lessons, show interest in their work and have good attitudes to learning. Provisional results at the end of Year 6 for English and mathematics show that attainment remains lower than that expected for pupils of a similar age and progress was satisfactory overall. The number reaching the higher Level 5 in English increased on that reached in 2009 as a result of improvements in writing. Boys, pupils eligible for free school meals and those on school action plus made significant progress. Although consistently better teaching accelerated the progress made by this class of pupils in Year 6, a legacy of underachievement led to gaps in pupils' learning which could not be completely tackled within one year. There is a growing trend of improved progress which is better in English than in mathematics. Results of the 2010, Key Stage 1 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics show that attainment for this group is in line with that expected for similar aged pupils. These results continue a rising trend and are an improvement on those at the time of the inspection. This is due to consistently better teaching and planned activities which more closely match pupils' needs.

There are positive signs that attainment and progress are on the rise. Pupils' work in their books since July and their work in lessons shows an improvement in both

quality and quantity of content. Handwriting has improved and pupils take a pride in their work. Pupils respond to the more-focused teaching at the start of lessons and quickly set about independent tasks showing enthusiasm and perseverance. This is an improved picture since July as pupils have responded to the renewed confidence of teachers and teaching assistants. Information from the school's system for checking pupils' progress and attainment reflects an uneven picture across the school. Attainment is higher in reading and mathematics than in writing, while progress is better in writing than in reading and mathematics. Teachers are providing much needed stability and improved progress is starting to become more established across the school. However, there is still work to do to secure accelerated progress across the school and in all subjects to raise attainment further. Senior staff recognise that, to do this, there is a need to sustain the stability of the staffing complement.

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

- Raise standards in English throughout the school, particularly writing – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

During the visit pupils' behaviour in classes was exemplary; this is a significant improvement from July. Pupils feel it has improved and one commented that 'Behaviour is better in classrooms as we have to concentrate'. Pupils are friendly with each other and with visitors, politely stepping aside to allow adults to pass by. They particularly like topic work which allows them to study different subjects and activities that are practical. Pupils have good relationships with staff and trust that any problems will be sorted out quickly.

The effectiveness of provision

There is more stability in the staffing profile which is strengthening the quality of teaching. There was a much higher proportion of good teaching than in the previous inspections and no lesson was less than satisfactory. Morale is much improved which is reflected in the calm, productive working atmosphere as teachers and teaching assistants gel as a team with a determined will to raise achievement for all groups of pupils. Many members of staff commented on how they look forward to coming to school and take pride in their connection with Manor. Senior staff are taking more responsibility and control over the type of support they accept from the local authority. Through emerging systems for self-evaluation senior staff match professional development activities to the identified need in the school. The local authority has welcomed this increasing capacity of senior leaders and managers and responds readily to any requests. Systems and procedures to check on the quality of teaching and learning are becoming more established. As a result, there is support and challenge for all staff to improve practice. Training on the assessment of pupils' learning during a lesson has continued to ensure new and returning teachers meet the high expectations of senior staff. Key aspects of teaching which the staff have

been developing are now featuring more frequently in lessons. Teachers use the same planning format; behaviour management strategies are applied regularly; opportunities to work in pairs and groups are in place; and there are more chances for pupils to check work with a partner. They have successfully improved the quality of questioning so they can discuss pupils' thinking and check on pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants continue to be more involved in supporting and guiding pupils during the lesson. Teachers' expectations have lifted as a result of pupils' positive response and, overall, the pace of learning is beginning to accelerate. As a result, there is a positive, purposeful air in lessons.

The school has built on the improvement in the quality of academic guidance noted in July. New and returning teachers have quickly become familiar with the policy and procedure. The use of 'I can' statements and 'steps to success' ensure pupils know what is expected of them and know how to achieve the learning outcome. All teachers use the agreed method of marking; highlighting in pink where pupils have succeeded and highlighting in green what needs to be improved. This is starting to have a positive effect on pupils' achievement, as one pupil commented, 'It helps you to know how well you have done'. While the system is being used effectively throughout the school and across subjects, it is being used to particularly good effect in the marking of writing; hence, the better progress in this subject. There is an opportunity for teachers to give pupils a chance to respond to any written comments to explore pupils' understanding further and to quicken the pace of learning.

Work on developing the curriculum has continued. After a few staff trialled and reviewed the new approach it was launched in each class in September. Curriculum maps give an overview of the topics covered over the year by each class. This provides an effective base to identify when concepts, knowledge and skills are introduced and revisited, and to pinpoint gaps in content. Planned activities are interesting, engage pupils and there is a focus on the development of the basic skills of writing and mathematics. For example, there is an emphasis on real-life situations which has included Year 6 pupils visiting local supermarkets to learn about shopping. Specific opportunities for pupils to develop writing skills in different contexts and genres are exemplified in the work seen in pupils' books. The use of photocopied worksheets has decreased. However, there is still room to minimise their use in mathematics so that pupils have a chance to work out problems using their own method and deepen thinking skills. Staff and pupils are enthusiastic about the curriculum and senior staff have planned a professional development day in January to assess the effectiveness of this method.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make at least satisfactory progress and continually build on their prior knowledge – good
- Improve the quality of academic guidance so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to produce better work – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last visit the school has turned a corner and improvement is gathering momentum due to the, albeit, short-term nature of a steady staff team. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a renewed drive and determination to improve the performance of the school which is shared by staff and governors. Members of the senior management team have shown energy, willingness and initiative in setting up systems, checking on what is happening and supporting others. This has been especially productive as new and returning teachers have adapted to different working practices. An example of this is the work of the deputy headteacher in implementing the reviewed marking procedure and ensuring it is effectively used across the school, including for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Much effort and time has been invested in pupils' progress reviews. These sessions and the accompanying detail of what each pupil needs to do next are a growing strength of the school to ensure underachievement is quickly tackled. Senior staff recognise that the time is right to shift to using this information to set challenges for pupils who can learn quickly. The development within the curriculum, although still resting on a few members of staff, has moved on. A plan to use professional development time to devise a system for checking pupils' progress in all subjects is in hand. The school is better placed to track its own progress and direct its own work.

Governors are a vital part of this development. The strengths identified in July have been built upon. A new parent governor has been appointed and there is a full complement of governors, which is an important step forward from the time of the inspection. Governors have held a parents' meeting for parents and carers to talk to governors and governors have devised a plan of action to encourage more parental involvement. This is a positive step forward. Similarly, staff and governors enjoyed a social evening which has forged positive relationships leading to an understanding of staff and governor roles and how they can work together to raise the performance of the school. Two governors have been into the school to look at the work of the school in reading and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Members of the governing body assiduously receive and evaluate information about pupils' progress and action taken by senior staff. Consequently, they have a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. For example, they recognise that performance in mathematics needs to improve. Together with senior staff they have completed an updated school self-evaluation which is an honest reflection of the current situation, although some judgements are overly rosy given the variability of pupils' achievement and the limited evidence of sustained improvement. Senior staff and governors recognise the essential need to maintain the momentum that a secure staff provides to accelerate progress more.

Since the last visit the headteacher, governors and local authority officers have taken noteworthy steps to appoint staff who will provide strength in the short term. This much-needed stability is starting to have a positive effect on pupils'

achievement. However, there still remain decisions to be taken to resolve the uncertainty of staff absence in the long term and establish a staff team with clear roles and responsibilities.

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

- Improve the effectiveness and knowledge of governors and subject leaders so they are able to evaluate accurately the quality of the school's provision and take steps to raise standards and achievement – good

External support

The School Improvement Partner has worked effectively with the school to set targets for 2011 and to review those for 2010. Local authority officers have completed a review of the school's work and the report celebrates the progress the school has made while acknowledging that attainment needs to rise further. Termly meetings continue to take place at which the headteacher reports to senior officers of the local authority about the performance of the school. Local authority consultants have worked with staff as a group and individually, giving valuable support to new and returning teachers. This has been well received by the school.