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21 January 2011

Mr M Mellin
Headteacher
Well Lane Primary School
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Dear Mr Mellin

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Well Lane Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 January 2011, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 9 December 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

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

Mr Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 9 December 2009

- Build the school's capacity to work independently of external support by improving the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and ensuring that:
 - monitoring and evaluation arrangements are rigorous, outcomes are clearly recorded and addressed and clear links made to the implementation of robust improvement planning
 - assessment arrangements are accurate and the system to monitor pupils' progress is robust so that any underachievement is quickly identified and tackled
 - the governing body regularly reviews and evaluates the school's provision and contributes effectively to helping set its strategic direction
 - safeguarding and child protection arrangements comply with current statutory requirements.

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - more activities are provided to increase pupils' eagerness to write in all subjects
 - pupils have more opportunities to improve their speaking skills
 - the presentation of pupils' work is improved, in particular, their handwriting
 - there is a consistent approach to teaching mathematical calculation in all classes with regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in a range of contexts
 - pupils have regular opportunities to take part in practical science investigations and have more opportunities to discuss their tasks and record their work independently.

- Improve the quality of teaching to a consistently good or better standard by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons
 - assessment information is consistently used to match work precisely to pupils' needs and abilities, in particular, those of the more able
 - all teachers use questioning that challenges pupils to think more deeply about their learning
 - the management of pupils' behaviour consistently matches the quality of the best practice
 - pupils are regularly involved in the assessment of their progress, and that marking indicates how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

- Improve the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - in Years 1 and 2 it meets the needs and abilities of all pupils
 - there are planned opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in a range of contexts
 - sufficient resources are available so that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage can choose activities during learning outdoors whatever the weather.

- Improve attendance by ensuring that:
 - arrangements to monitor attendance are rigorous and robust and steps are taken to encourage good attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Special measures: monitoring of Well Lane Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection from 25 to 26 January 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work in all classrooms. He scrutinised documents and met with staff, governors, parents and carers, and a representative of the local authority. He talked informally to many children and pupils as they went about their work.

Context

The Year 5 and 6 pupils are now taught in two distinct classes. The new class is taught by a newly qualified teacher who knows the pupils well.

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

Pupils continue to make accelerated progress in their learning. The recent publication of the validated national test results for 2010 confirms their general improvement and their marked improvement in English. Parents and carers commented that their children's reading was much better. In each class, the legacies of previous underachievement and disaffection are being eradicated. Attainment generally remains at below average levels but predictions for future achievement are continually being revised upwards as gaps in learning are closed and as pupils' potential is unlocked. This is seen clearly for the current Year 6 pupils. At the beginning of the year, estimates for their end-of-year attainment, based on previous progress, suggested few would achieve nationally expected levels. Now, half way through the year, estimates suggest that the government's floor targets will be met and that nearly all pupils will achieve two full levels of progress since they began Key Stage 2. Promise for the future is even more evident for young children entering Well Lane. These children have no experience of the school when it was struggling. They are enjoying an exceptionally good start to school life in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The levels of learning and development seen in children in Reception appear striking against those of the children just beginning their Nursery year.

A visitor to the school who had not been here for some months could not fail to be impressed by the improvement in pupils' learning. In each class, a calm and purposeful atmosphere prevails. Pupils of all abilities work hard and show pride in their work. There is at this school a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, over twice the national average, and the range of learning difficulties is exceptionally broad. These pupils feel fully included in lessons and, with the support they receive, their continuing good progress remains a strength of the school. The walls of the school are full of vibrant displays celebrating pupils' achievements, especially in writing, maintaining the improved ethos noted in the previous monitoring visit. As teachers make tasks more interesting and active for pupils, they respond well, with increased motivation, effort and enjoyment.

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school's increasingly effective provision to support pupils' emotional well-being is bringing important dividends, producing marked improvements for some and earning the gratitude and respect of families most affected. All personal development outcomes show significant improvement. Pupils' social and communication skills are improving along with their academic learning. Pupils' behaviour has also improved considerably. Partly this is because of the embedding of consistent behaviour management policies throughout the school. Also, pupils know the staff's care for them is genuine. Equally importantly, it is because pupils are now thoroughly and actively involved in lessons and in running their school.

Attendance remains an issue for the school, despite the obvious enjoyment of pupils when they attend. The school has well-established, rigorous procedures to promote good attendance, including calls to home on the first day of absence, visits to the home by staff to bring pupils into school and, backed by the local authority, the threat of prosecution. The school has instituted a Parent Panel as part of its increasing involvement of parents and carers and in its drive to improve attendance. There have been particular issues this winter, such as bad health within the community, but overall, insufficient progress has been made in tackling this serious problem. On most schooldays, up to 1 in every 10 pupils is absent and unable to benefit from the much-improved provision.

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

- Improve attendance – inadequate

The effectiveness of provision

At the time of the last monitoring visit, the inspector concluded that the clear improvements in the leadership and management were at the heart of the transformation in the school's performance. On this visit, the increasing confidence of staff has led to a marked improvement in the quality of provision. The quality of teaching observed during the visit exceeded the challenging recommendation within the school's inspection that it should be consistently good. No teaching observed was less than good and over half was judged outstanding or with outstanding features. Teaching had many strengths. Most prominent were the rigorous use of assessments of pupils' progress to plan work that was finely tuned to their learning needs and their active involvement in lessons. Much was required of them to complete tasks. Expectations of pupils were high.

The curriculum has developed apace. It is now creative and imaginative; it links subjects together to provide meaningful reasons for pupils to read, write and investigate. It is closely related to children's and pupils' interests and it ensures their enthusiasm and motivation. Many good examples were observed. The experiment to provide a curriculum more suited to pupils' needs in Year 1 is proving extremely successful. Of particular note around the school is work on Shakespeare, on Aztecs, and on using traditional fairy stories as a basis for literacy lessons. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, an inspired 'jungle' obstacle trail in the outdoor area was highly effective in promoting children's motor skills and coordination.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to develop and improve. Early identification of special needs is enabling pupils with specific learning difficulties, speech and communication problems, and autism, for example, to access support for learning and enable them to participate fully in school life from the beginning. Intervention programmes for pupils at risk of falling behind are well organised and fully evaluated to ensure their effectiveness. Pupils with emotional and social special needs now receive very effective support, considerably enhancing their self-esteem and well-being.

The increasing involvement of parents and carers was most marked during this visit. The school is reaching out to its community much more positively, including to those who are hard to reach. It is seeking a genuine partnership with parents and, according to parents and carers, is winning the trust and confidence of the community.

The care, guidance and support for pupils were not identified as areas for improvement during the school's inspection. Nevertheless, this aspect of the school's work is improving along with the others. Parents and carers are particularly sensitive to whether their children are cared for and they praise the school in this respect. Genuine care is demonstrated at all levels: leaders, teachers, assistants, administrative, support and cleaning staff all show exemplary commitment to the pupils of the school.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to a consistently good or better standard – outstanding
- Improve the curriculum in each key stage – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The challenge given to the school's leaders and managers at the last monitoring visit was to sustain the good improvements to date. This they have done. The staff now present as a highly cohesive and committed team, increasingly able to provide for the extensive learning and social and emotional needs of the pupils. The last monitoring letter also suggested that governors and senior staff, other than the headteacher, should have a higher profile with

parents and carers. In this respect, good progress has been made. Parents are becoming more aware, for example, of the role played by the deputy headteacher and of who the governors are. Parents and carers welcome the opportunity to find out more about their children's education and what the school provides. This partnership is considerably stronger than it was. Leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage are also engaging fully with parents and carers, as does the special needs coordinator.

Pupils' progress is now rigorously monitored and analysed. Middle managers are much more involved in devising, implementing and evaluating improvement plans. This is making leadership more broadly based and, as a consequence, more secure. It also enables the headteacher to take a more impartial overview of the school improvement process and, with the governors, provide more challenge as well as support to the process.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Building the school's capacity to work independently of external support by improving the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels – good

External support

The local authority is gradually reducing the level of support for the school. Aside from the regular monitoring reviews it undertakes, the most recent of which was very positive, it provides little more support now to Well Lane than to the majority of its schools. This approach recognises the school's continued good progress and its ability to stand on its own. Such is the development of outstanding elements of provision at the school, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage that the local authority is beginning to see the school as a source of good practice for other schools.