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25 March 2011

Mr J Devine
Executive Headteacher
St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School
Church Lane
Wolstanton
Newcastle
ST5 0EF

Dear Mr Devine

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Peter Lawley, additional inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 March 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 Diocese of Birmingham, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on Tuesday 23 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at teaching in every class at least once. Joint lesson observations were undertaken with members of the senior leadership team. The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' attainment and progress. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, coordinators for numeracy, literacy, special education needs and/or disabilities, Early Years Foundation Stage, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils and parents.

Context

There have been changes in staffing and staffing structures since the last monitoring inspection in November 2010. Through the partnership established by the executive headteacher, the teachers from Our Lady and St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School are working closely in collaboration with teachers in St Wulstans to share and further develop good practice in teaching and learning.

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

Pupils are now making good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 where the majority of teaching observed was good and some was outstanding. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make satisfactory progress overall in lessons and over time. Teachers' planning is much improved and teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn. Teachers clearly explain to the pupils how their success will be measured. Assessment information is used with increasing confidence and effectiveness. Work is provided which meets the needs of all pupils, including the growing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. More able pupils are increasingly challenged. This is due to teachers raising their expectations and adapting work in lessons more precisely to match their needs. This practice however, is not yet consistent across the school. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and that they are learning a lot more than previously. Pupils' report that this is because teachers make their lessons more interesting, by using a range of activities and resources, including information and communication technology, which engages their attention. Pupils also enjoy lessons where they can talk to and work with each other. However, pupils do not enjoy lessons where they have to listen to teachers for a long time, particularly if they understand and want to get on with their work. Teachers' marking is regular and helps to explain to pupils how well they are doing and what they must do to reach their next level. This however is not yet consistent across the school. There is a high level of commitment from staff who are all focused on school improvement, raising pupils' achievement

and rates of progress. Stronger assessment procedures and consultation with pupils has enabled staff to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Target setting is much more refined, and closer monitoring identifies trends in attainment for groups of pupils and those individuals who are underperforming. Pupils who are not doing as well as they should receive one-to-one support. Evidence of tracking shows that this strategy is effective and these pupils make good progress from their starting point within a short period. These practices are becoming better embedded, although they are not yet consistent across the school.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour remain good across the school. During the inspection visit, pupils in all year groups were settled, highly involved in activities in lessons and behaving responsibly at play and lunchtimes. Pupils are taking a greater responsibility for managing their own behaviour and this has resulted in a very positive climate for learning across the school. Pupils work purposefully, on their own and with other pupils when given the opportunity. They attribute improved behaviour to clearer expectations and firm guidance with rewards and sanctions that are understood and enjoyed by all. The whole school is focused on meeting the personal and social developmental needs of all pupils through a range of structured activities, and this is paying dividends. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors said that they enjoyed attending school. However, some of the pupils raised some issues which concerned them. These were shared with the senior leadership team and the governors who have agreed to look into some of these concerns raised by some pupils.

The effectiveness of provision

Good quality of teaching is becoming more consistent across the school with no inadequate teaching observed. Good practice is particularly evident in literacy and numeracy where pupils are making good progress. This is due in part to the senior leadership team and subject coordinators working together, with the support of the literacy consultant, and experienced teachers from the partner school. The quality and range of activities in lessons has improved overall, particularly the one-to-one support. Staff are becoming self-critical and reflective practitioners. They are beginning to evaluate lessons regularly and check what pupils are learning with greater consistency. Where pupils have not made the expected progress, it has been due to staffing instability. This has caused some loss of momentum in pupils' learning, and many have found it challenging to adapt to different teaching styles. The leadership team has responded decisively to minimise some of the disruptions. Where teaching is satisfactory, lesson beginnings and endings are sometimes unnecessarily lengthy, causing some pupils to disengage. At times, tasks are too ambitious or still not challenging pupils enough. Pupils' work is celebrated and as a result pupils are taking a much greater pride in their work, although some inconsistencies remain. Teachers' marking makes greater reference to how well pupils are meeting their targets and mostly provides developmental comments.

However, teachers do not consistently follow this up and pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to respond to these comments.

The school's assessment procedures are now robust and systematically record attainment. However, the school recognises that further work is needed to record pupils' progress more accurately. Assessment to support individual pupils in their learning is much more reliable. Systems are now in place, although not fully embedded across the school. Pupils' growing confidence, now enables them to contribute to self and peer assessment. Staff are using data in addition to their own monitoring of pupils' progress more effectively to influence target setting. All teachers make sure that pupils' individual targets are clear, particularly regarding what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers and pupils regularly visit these targets to ensure that pupils are on track. The school's evidence suggests that parents are being kept well informed about the progress their child is making through a range of activities including parents' meetings at the end of each term.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Staff and the leadership team demonstrate a resolute determination to improve the quality of education for pupils throughout the school. The determination of all staff to ensure improvement, is largely due to the strengthened leadership team, where potential is being realised. The executive headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the strong governing body, are key elements in the school's improvement since the last monitoring visit. Changes to the structure of the leadership team have been agreed, and are beneficial in engaging further with parents to strengthen the partnership working and to ensure mutual support. A clear direction is set by the leadership team and the governors. This ensures that the school has a clear focus on improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. The subject coordinators are now working well as a team, sharing and developing good practice. Subject coordinators are now confident in holding staff to account for pupils' progress in class and in the marking of books. The senior leadership team has further refined the systems for tracking pupils' progress. They are now able to determine the progress being made by different groups of pupils and this informs the range of intervention strategies used by the school. For example, the one-to-one support is working effectively in helping pupils to improve their overall progress and attainment.

The school's procedures and recording for safeguarding pupils is robust and in line with current government requirements. The awareness of staff and governors' with regard to safeguarding continues to be raised through ongoing relevant professional development activities.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements – good.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement – good.

External support

The school continues to benefit from the support given by the local authority and through the partnership with Our Lady and St Werburgh's Catholic Primary school. The support for literacy and numeracy has been particularly effective. This is contributing to improved teaching and progress made by pupils. The level of support from the local authority has reduced, as agreed with the school, to enable it to continue to build its own capacity for continued improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- sustain the improvements across the school to address fully the priorities for improvements identified during the previous inspection and monitoring inspections

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2009 asked the school to do the following.

- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements by:
 - updating the school's single central record in line with government requirements and providing all adults with the required training
 - providing adequate supervision of pupils before and after school
 - carrying out regular and robust risk assessments and updating them in a timely manner
 - managing pupils' behaviour consistently and fairly, recording any incidents accurately.
- To improve the quality of teaching across the school, teachers should:
 - make very clear to pupils what they are going to learn and explain to them how their success will be measured
 - ensure that lesson planning makes effective use of assessment information to enable them to plan lessons that provide work at the right level for children of all abilities
 - ensure that when they mark pupils' work, teachers explain what pupils must improve in order to reach the next level
 - set clear expectations and guidance for what the school wants to see in lessons and establish robust systems to check that all staff follow

it, particularly in managing pupils' behaviour.

- To improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement, leaders and managers should:
 - set a clear direction for the school that focuses on improvements to achievement and quality of teaching by strengthening the role of all leaders and holding all staff accountable for pupils' progress
 - further refine the tracking of pupils' progress to determine the progress made by different groups and inform intervention
 - be more systematic in following up weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment within challenging timescales
 - in all strategic planning, add specific, quantifiable and timed targets, so that progress towards them is measurable and can be reported accurately.

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – except for academies
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.schools@dcf.gsi.gov.uk)
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The local young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead and team inspectors.