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7 April 2011

Mr M Cotton
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cotton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Castleway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 05 April 2011 and 06 April 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2010. 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed with the approval of the monitoring HMI.

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

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

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

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects:
 - improving teaching so that more lessons are consistently good or better and engage and challenge pupils
 - ensuring that assessment informs teachers' planning and is used effectively to support learning for all pupils
 - developing and delivering a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, provides them with a wide range of positive experiences and effectively promotes community cohesion.

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable:
 - developing and sharing a vision for the school's improvement and sustaining the momentum to achieve this
 - monitoring the school's work rigorously and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses accurately to provide a secure basis for coherent improvement planning
 - ensuring that the curriculum meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Castleway Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection from 05 April 2011 to 06 April 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and records of pupils' achievements and analysed pupils' work. She met with the acting headteacher, middle leaders, parents, representatives of the governing body, the school council and the local authority. Seventeen lessons were observed. In addition, a learning walk was undertaken with a middle leader to observe phonics (the sounds that letters make) sessions taught by teaching assistants throughout the school. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work in lessons and around the school were also observed.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the governors and local authority have appointed a new headteacher to lead the school from September 2011. A local leader in education, partnered by one of his assistant headteachers, continues to provide support as acting headteacher for the rest of this academic year. Staffing remains stable in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 2, but both Key Stage 1 teachers have been absent due to illness throughout the spring term. These classes are currently being taught by long-term supply teachers. Booster provision for Years 5 and 6 is being provided by an Advanced Skills Teacher in mathematics and a member of staff from the support partner school in English.

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

Validated Key Stage 2 test results in 2010 show that the proportion of pupils who attained the government's expectation of Level 4 in English and mathematics was below the national average. Similarly, the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in these subjects was also below the national average. Teacher assessments, at the end of Key Stage 1, showed a significant improvement from the attainment achieved in reading and writing in 2009 but attainment in mathematics remained below the national average.

The progress of pupils is improving, but not consistently in all year groups and subjects. The achievement in English, particularly in writing and spelling, remains a weakness. Pupils are making better progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 than in upper Key Stage 2. The school has correctly identified the need for booster classes for mathematics and English in the current Year 5 and 6 class to rectify previous weaknesses in teaching, overcome barriers to learning and ensure pupils are more confident in answering test questions. Plans are also in place to provide the necessary staff development to increase teachers' confidence and expertise in the teaching of English in upper Key Stage 2.

The school's monitoring data and a review of pupils' work demonstrate that attainment remains below the national average in both key stages reflecting the legacy of previous underachievement within the school. However, levels of attainment are slowly rising as improvements to the quality of the curriculum, teaching and the better use of tracking systems to record pupils' progress become increasingly embedded. Progress within the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to good, but this is not yet consistently reflected in pupils' written work.

Monitoring of attainment and progress and the quality of teaching and learning has been given a high priority. More targeted teaching of groups and individuals and the establishment of a secure baseline from which to measure pupils' progress have been important steps forward. The new whole-school language development programme has been well received by staff, parents and pupils and is now in place throughout the school. This is beginning to address some of the gaps in pupils' basic skills and is making an effective contribution to addressing the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are increasingly better equipped to play an active role in the life of the school. This is demonstrated by the school council's good participation in the recent appointment of the headteacher, and in the provision of toast before school, the decoration of the toilets and regeneration of the playgrounds. Pupils are polite and the majority behave well. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored and are currently satisfactory. Two pupils have been excluded during the spring term.

The effectiveness of provision

At the time of the previous monitoring inspection 71% of the teaching observed was good. This has now improved to 82% of the teaching observed. The quality of teaching ranges from good to satisfactory. Lesson planning continues to improve with teachers drawing on marking and the evaluation of pupils' previous learning to design activities that build upon this and address any areas that require further consolidation. In the good lessons, teachers constantly check on pupils' learning to identify gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding, ensuring work is appropriately matched to meet their next-step learning needs and misconceptions are addressed. Effective teachers have high expectations and explain clearly to pupils what is expected of them and what they need to do to achieve their objectives. In the better lessons, a good range of activities ensures that a brisk pace is maintained, expectations are reinforced and effective use is made of teaching assistants to support learning. This ensures pupils are effectively engaged and appropriately challenged. Satisfactory lessons are characterised by lower expectations, a lack of pace and missed

opportunities to target individual pupils' next-step learning needs and maximise the amount of progress they make in their learning.

The school's drive to improve the tracking of pupils' progress has resulted in a more accurate evaluation of pupils' work and progress and a secure baseline from which to measure pupils' progress. Improvements made have yet to have a sustained impact on pupils' work and attainment, but there is evidence to show a significant acceleration in the amount of progress pupils make in the classes and subjects where there is consistently good teaching and assessment practice. The school's tracking data and inspection evidence show that pupils in Year 1 are currently making the most progress in their learning.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements, including for religious education and is increasingly broad, balanced and relevant. Opportunities have been taken to provide pupils with exciting and enriching learning experiences inside and outside the school. Parents and pupils report positively on the changes made, particularly the use of memorable visits to local places of interest. A skills-based curriculum has been implemented in the humanities subjects and will be extended to other foundation subjects in the summer term. The recent local authority review correctly identified the need to focus on the assessment and recording of attainment targets in the foundation subjects and religious education.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There is a strong commitment to improvement, driven by the acting headteacher's strong leadership and rigorous monitoring of the work of the school. He has worked very hard to establish effective teamwork, improve the school environment and to change the culture of learning in the school. The acting headteacher has skilfully prioritised issues that need action and drawn on specific external support to make the necessary improvements. The school is moving in the right direction and at an increasing pace. He has a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to secure the necessary improvements. The staff team continues to work hard to tackle areas for improvement. There have been a number of successes. This includes whole-school engagement in the new language development programme, the introduction of a more appropriate curriculum, improvements to the quality of teaching and assessment, and the accurate measurement of pupils' progress and attainment. Effective systems to identify and address the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now also in place.

Parents are very supportive of recent changes made in the school and the impact this has had on their children's attitudes and progress. They particularly value improvements to communications, the approachability of the acting headteacher and the recent introduction of homework, book bags and phonic key rings.

The acting headteacher has ensured that leaders and managers at all levels are taking on increased levels of responsibility and are better held to account. For example, middle leaders have been given time and significant support to ensure they can begin to monitor

improvements to provision and report back on the impact of changes made in terms of pupils' attainment and progress.

Improvements in governance have been maintained since the first monitoring visit. Training from the local authority, good support from the acting headteacher and much appreciated mentoring provided through the appointment of an additional experienced governor is helping to improve the governors' understanding of their roles. Governors are increasingly involved in the daily working of the school and this is helping to develop their awareness and understanding of the issues to be addressed. The governing body shares the commitment to improvement.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has continued to provide effective support for the school. Regular and accurate reviews of the progress the school has made in relation to the areas for improvement have been made. The school has particularly appreciated the support it has received to ensure accurate assessment information systems are in place and the bespoke training provided by a number of consultants. A new headteacher has been appointed. The local leader of education continues to drive the school forwards and provide invaluable support and guidance to the school. A number of staff from the support school partner act as very good role models, providing good training and team teaching opportunities to aid school improvement and enhance the capacity of leadership and management within the school. Discussions have yet to take place between internal and external stakeholders to ensure the momentum for improvement is sustained and coherent improvement planning is in place when changes to staffing and leadership take place in the summer.