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13 May 2011

Mrs C Render and Ms S Stainton  
Interim Headteachers  
St Cuthbert's Catholic School and Nursery  
Victoria Road  
Botcherby  
Carlisle  
Cumbria  
CA1 2UE

Dear Mrs Render/Ms Stainton

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic School and Nursery**

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 May 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 2 March 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

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 Cumbria.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 2 March 2010**

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 in order to accelerate pupils' progress, raise attainment and narrow the gap between standards achieved at this school and those seen nationally. In particular, the school should:
  - raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that work is matched more closely to pupils' learning needs, so that all pupils make progress in every lesson
  - improve the management of pupils' behaviour in lessons
  - improve the clarity of teachers' explanations of new work and of the tasks set for pupils
  - ensure that marking leads to improvements in pupils' work.
- Improve the standard of pupils' behaviour so that it does not hinder learning.
- Strengthen leadership so the school develops the capacity for sustained improvement.
- Ensure that pupils are taught age-appropriate basic skills progressively, especially in English and mathematics.
- Further improve pupils' attendance by ensuring that all possible measures to do so are robustly deployed.

## **Special measures: monitoring of St Cuthbert's Catholic School and Nursery**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection from 11 to 12 May 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of pupils, staff, the local authority general adviser and the Chair of the Governing Body.

#### **Context**

There have been no further changes to teaching staff since the last monitoring visit. A substantive headteacher has been appointed to start in September 2011. Two interim headteachers are continuing to lead improvement until the end of July 2011.

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

Pupils are enjoying their learning more because they find lessons increasingly interesting, behaviour is much improved and the school is generally a happier place. Pupils' progress across the whole school is similar to that seen at the last visit. They make the best progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6 where teaching is effectively matched to their learning needs. Activities provide the right amount of challenge to maintain pupils' interest and ensure learning progresses at a rapid pace. The pace of learning is improving in lessons in other year groups but is slower over time. Some pupils, particularly the more able, spend too much time reinforcing concepts and skills and say they find work 'too easy'. Furthermore, the Key Stage 1 assessments have not been moderated in the past and the levels assigned to pupils have been too high. As a result, there has been a lack of continuity in learning between Key Stage 1 and 2.

These weaknesses are beginning to be addressed through better assessment processes. Key Stage 1 assessments are now accurate. Assessments across the whole school provide more detailed information so that teaching can be more accurately matched to learning needs. Overall attainment at Key Stage 1 appears similar to the previous year but it is based on moderated, secure assessment. Attainment in the current Year 6 class is significantly higher than it was in 2010, indicating that the gap between the school's standards and those achieved nationally is closing.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 in order to accelerate pupils' progress, raise attainment and narrow the gap between standards achieved at this school and nationally – satisfactory

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour has continued to improve. Pupils behave well in shared areas around the school, showing respect and consideration for each other. Their behaviour in lessons is no longer a barrier to learning. This is because activities are better matched to their needs and interests and there is a consistent approach to behaviour management. Attendance is higher than it was at the last visit and significantly higher than it was in the same period the previous year. It is currently in line with the national average. Improvements have been brought about by effective strategies, including rewards for good or improved attendance and targeted support to families of pupils who are persistently absent. The Learning Mentor has provided effective support to families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This has made a strong contribution to improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Pupils show an increased pride in their school and are keen to play a full part in upholding the behaviour code and supporting those who need more help. Older pupils say they would like to have more responsibilities in school. Pupils generally feel safe and secure because they know the boundaries and know they can turn to adults for support. Comments such as, 'Good behaviour is just normal now', and, 'Every day, I wake up happy to go to school', reflect the views of most pupils.

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

- Improve the standard of pupils' behaviour so that it does not hinder learning – good
- Further improve pupils' attendance by ensuring that all possible measures to do so are robustly deployed – good

## **The effectiveness of provision**

Teachers have developed a better understanding of the levels pupils are working at and have a clearer understanding of what pupils should achieve in each year group. Key skills are being taught more systematically, building on prior knowledge. The rate of pupils' progress is improving overall but the pace of learning is still inconsistent and too slow in some year groups. Consequently, pupils are still working below age-related expectations across much of Key Stage 2. There are appropriate transition plans to ensure that pupils build on their knowledge and skills as they move to the next class.

Behaviour is being managed well. Pupils have responded very positively to the revised behaviour code and display a positive attitude to learning. Lessons are more interesting because teachers are using a broader range of approaches and planning more interesting activities. Pupils particularly enjoy opportunities to solve problems, investigate and work on longer, challenging tasks. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6 classes where such opportunities are plentiful. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are mostly supported well by teaching assistants. However, there is a tendency in some classes to group the most difficult to teach and those with most challenging behaviour together with the teaching assistant. This limits their opportunities to learn from other pupils and can reinforce inappropriate behaviour.

The approach to marking has become further embedded and is consistent. Pupils now understand how well they are doing and know their learning targets. However, they do not always take account of comments in their books to improve subsequent pieces of work and teachers are inconsistent in their follow up. Pupils are not given sufficient time to reflect on feedback and follow it through in some classes. There is excellent practice in Year 6 where marking is very explicit, pupils are given time to reflect on the feedback and understand their responsibility in ensuring it is acted on in subsequent pieces of work.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 in order to accelerate pupils' progress, raise attainment and narrow the gap between standards achieved at this school and nationally – satisfactory
- Ensure that pupils are taught age-appropriate basic skills progressively, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The interim headteachers are providing effective leadership to ensure improvements in assessment, marking and pupil progress tracking become embedded. They have put effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision. Performance management structures have improved since the last visit with clearer links between performance management objectives, pupil progress meetings and teachers' personal action plans. The role of subject leaders has developed further, with staff taking a more-active part in monitoring planning, pupils' work and progress. However, the lines of accountability, roles and responsibilities within the senior leadership team lack clarity. At present, the deputy headteacher's role is concerned with the day-to-day smooth running of the school and does not include a strategic leadership or performance management function.

The knowledge and skills of the governing body are improving with support from the local authority. The Chair of the Governing Body has a good understanding of whole-school issues and provides support and challenge to school leaders. However, there is not a corporate approach to strategic decision making or challenge and support for school leaders.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Strengthen leadership so the school develops the capacity for sustained improvement – satisfactory

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. The interim headteachers are securing steady improvements and adviser support is appropriately focused on building capacity in the governing body and leadership team.