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16 October 2011

Mrs P Moss  
Headteacher  
St Cuthbert's Catholic Community School  
Victoria Road  
Botcherby  
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Cumbria  
CA1 2UE

Dear Mrs Moss

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 October 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 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

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed if vacancies arise.

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 Cumbria.

Yours sincerely,

Jean Kendall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 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 inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Community School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection from 18 to 19 October 2011**

#### **Evidence**

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

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, a substantive headteacher has taken up post and two teachers have left the school. There has been extensive building work to upgrade Reception and Key Stage 1 classrooms.

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

Staff have continued to build on the improvements noted at the last monitoring visit. Their concerted efforts have brought about significantly improved results in the 2011 standardised assessment tasks. In the end of Year 6 tests, 67% of pupils achieved Level 4 and above in both English and mathematics. This is more than double the 2010 levels, above floor targets and closer to the national average. Attainment at Key Stage 1 has also improved and, although it remains below national averages, the gap is narrowing in all subjects. The majority of pupils are making expected or better progress based on their prior attainment. Consequently, most pupils are now working closer to age-related expectations in each year group. However, attainment in the current Year 6 is lower because an unusually high number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are enjoying lessons because teachers have a more varied approach and are planning interesting activities. They particularly enjoy practical and investigative activities. Pupils make better progress in English than they do in mathematics, but the gap between the two subjects is narrowing as the teaching of mathematics improves.

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 those seen nationally – satisfactory

#### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Pupils feel safe because behaviour has improved generally and they have confidence in adults to deal with any issues that might arise. They say that school is a happier and more ordered place. Their behaviour in shared areas is usually considerate, respectful and safe.

The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, although some minor disruptive behaviour was observed during this visit. This was partly because activities did not fully capture pupils' interest, but also because a few pupils find it difficult to work alongside each other. Those who struggle in this respect are effectively supported to help them reflect on and modify their behaviour. The vast majority of pupils respond appropriately to teachers' directions and are cooperative. They have a positive attitude to learning and show concentration and perseverance when faced with challenging tasks. Their enthusiasm for learning was seen in a number of lessons where they had opportunities to problem solve and work independently for a sustained period. However, there are times when pupils are passive because they lack opportunities to direct their own learning.

There are robust strategies in place to follow-up absence and support families to attend and be punctual. Attendance has continued to improve and current levels are higher than the comparable period last year. Attendance for the whole academic year, 2010 to 2011, was in line with the national average.

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

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

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Teachers show a high level of commitment to improving their practice and raising pupils' achievement. A number of staff have moved year groups, which has required them to review their planning and update their knowledge of the curriculum. They have approached these challenges professionally and confidently. In the most effective lessons, teachers provide clear explanation and arouse pupils' curiosity at the start. Pupils are able to reinforce their knowledge and hone their skills on interesting and challenging activities. In Year 4, for example, pupils enjoyed learning about the properties of three-dimensional shapes by investigating their nets or building the shapes for themselves. Children in the Nursery class were excited by the numerous opportunities to experiment, discover and develop their skills across all areas of learning. Where teaching was less effective it was generally because pupils were not actively engaged or found activities repetitive.

Overall, the pace of learning in individual lessons has quickened because teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. They have created bright, stimulating learning environments, making good use of resources. Basic skills are taught increasingly well through activities that provide appropriate challenge. Marking is effective in helping pupils improve their written work and aid their understanding. However, the pace of learning over time is slow across some units of work and pupils sometimes feel they are repeating activities already experienced. Planning for topic work and for the teaching of reading varies from class to class. There is some good practice, where topics are well planned to take account of pupils' interests, provide opportunities for creative development

and reinforce basic skills, but this is not consistent. Pupils achieve relatively well in reading, but in some of the guided sessions observed, pupils had limited opportunities to solve problems and develop reading strategies.

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 those seen 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 newly appointed headteacher has been welcomed by staff and pupils. She is successfully building on improvements made under the leadership of interim headteachers. In addition, she has clarified the roles of staff across the school so that leadership at all levels is more effective. Members of the senior leadership team have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and are working well as a team. Their skills in monitoring and evaluation have developed further through working alongside the headteacher and local authority advisers. They are successfully leading developments in assessment, behaviour management and the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Subject leaders similarly have a clearer understanding of expectations and a more active role in securing further improvement. The headteacher has introduced new systems to track pupils' progress which staff find accessible and helpful. Developments are being well paced to secure further capacity within the school. Developments in the governing body, including the appointment of two new governors, are also helping to build capacity in leadership. Committees are established and taking an increasing role in supporting and challenging school leaders.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- strengthen leadership so the school develops the capacity for sustained improvement - good

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide timely and appropriate support to the school. It is providing good support to the headteacher but is rightly reducing its support from advisers as internal capacity develops.