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13 November 2011

Miss K Horn  
Headteacher  
St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Ridge Terrace  
Bedlington  
Northumberland  
NE22 6EQ

Dear Miss Horn

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 10 November 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 in June 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 - good

Newly Qualified teachers may not 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 Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northumberland.

Yours sincerely,

Joy Frost

Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



## **Annex**

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

- Raise achievement, attainment and progress in writing, especially for boys and the more-able pupils by:
  - making lessons more interesting and exciting in order to engage pupils fully and help develop writing skills
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to talk about what they are going to write about before they tackle a writing task
  - ensuring that there is a clear focus on improving writing skills, whenever pupils are writing in other subjects across the curriculum.
  
- Improve the quality of the teaching and the use of assessment so that there is greater proportion of good or better learning in lessons by:
  - raising the expectations of learning and progress in lessons
  - using assessment information more precisely to inform planning and provide challenge for the more-able pupils
  - increasing the pace of learning and the active involvement of pupils in learning activities
  - improving marking and the use of targets to help pupils become more aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
  - improving the management of pupils' behaviour to promote a positive climate for learning.
  
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing body by:
  - securing stability in the long-term leadership of the school
  - ensuring that recently introduced systems to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of provision are checked rigorously for their impact on pupils' achievement
  - ensuring greater rigour in the way teachers are held accountable for pupils' progress
  - creating a curriculum that motivates and engages pupils more fully and that more closely meets the needs of all pupils
  - developing and implementing policy and plans for promoting community cohesion that fully take into account the school's context and evaluates its impact on pupils' outcomes.

## **Special measures: monitoring of St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 11 and 10 November 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, staff, and two groups of pupils, a member of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a local authority representative and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors scrutinised safeguarding procedures, pupil tracking systems and pupils' mathematics books in Years 2 to 6.

#### **Context**

Since the last visit there have been substantial changes to the staffing in the school. The executive headteacher, interim head of school and one member of staff have left the school. A new executive headteacher from the local Catholic high school has been appointed for one year. A substantive head of school and a deputy head of school from existing staff; along with three new experienced members of staff in Years 2, 4 and 6 have been appointed and all started in September 2011. At the time of the visit one member of staff was on long-term sickness absence and two part-time nursery teachers have opted to work full time to cover for the absent colleague, one in Year 5. The numbers on roll are rising steadily and there has been an increase in the number of pupils with a Traveller/ Romany heritage. The school has a Year 6 class for the first time.

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

Pupils' attainment in writing is improving steadily. As a result of planned lessons to teach pupils 'the sounds that letters make' every day, they are developing their basic skills and plugging gaps in past learning. This was evident in pupils' writing books where the inspector observed more pieces of extended writing and writing of a better quality. In lessons, boys were well engaged in their writing tasks and a decrease in the number of work sheets used has raised pupils' expectations of what they can do independently. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were observed writing play scripts. They were aware of the format for a script and the difference between dialogue and stage directions based on characters they had developed earlier in the lesson. All pupils in this lesson completed the task and were able to talk about their work with the inspector. This gave pupils a purpose for their writing and, as a consequence, they produced unaided writing of improved quality and length than seen previously.

Senior leaders have raised the profile of writing and there are many more displays of pupils writing evident in classrooms and in corridors. Teachers are using their classroom walls



more effectively to remind pupils about their writing and to give them prompts. Pupils' books and teachers' planning show that there are improved opportunities for pupils to use their improving reading skills in other subjects. For example, in a mathematics lesson for the oldest pupils, who were working on interpreting line graphs, the teacher used good questioning skills to develop pupils understanding of what the graph was telling them and provided opportunities for pupils to think and reason beyond the literal.

In the most recent teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment was lower than national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. While this may not tell a rosy picture these pupils had made accelerated progress from their earlier low starting points and the assessments were accurate. The school's own data are showing that, in reading, an increased amount of pupils are making more than expected progress and this is raising attainment in most year groups for identified groups, such as boys and higher attaining pupils. In most classes, pupils on the special educational needs register are also making accelerated progress as a consequence of tightly focused interventions and revised procedures which identify pupils' barriers to learning. Pupils' progress in mathematics is accelerating due to higher expectations and very close checking of what each pupil can achieve. The new tracking system introduced and designed by the executive headteacher is instrumental in raising teachers' expectations. Teachers are held to account through detailed and rigorous half-termly meetings with every member of staff to discuss pupils' progress and the next steps in learning. This degree of monitoring is new since the beginning of term but already the impact on different groups of pupils' achievement can be seen.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement, attainment and progress in writing, especially for boys and the more able pupils – satisfactory

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour in and around the school is improving well. Clear behaviour management systems, understood by pupils, were in evident in classrooms. New staff have picked up these routines quickly and, in lessons where the best teaching was observed, behaviour was exemplary. In weaker lessons some silly behaviour was observed. Attendance has declined slightly but senior leaders are aware of this and have plans to raise the profile of attendance across the school; especially with new families who have joined recently and those who take extended holidays abroad. Pupils are developing a much broader understanding of pupils with different cultures and backgrounds through an improved curriculum and planned visits and visitors to the school. In a religious education lesson, Year 2 pupils were observed enjoying a whole-class Shabbat dinner. They had baked their own bread the previous day and were enthusiastically carrying out the rituals associated with the Jewish custom with reverence and respect, which improved their spiritual and cultural development.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

Teachers' planning for learning has improved and there is sound evidence of teachers adapting their planning throughout the week based on pupils' achievements in lessons. This is most effective in mathematics lessons where it is accelerating pupils' progress, ensuring that concepts are firmly understood before moving learning on. Teachers are less skilled in using their assessments to improve pupils' writing skills in this way and success criteria in lessons are too often based on quantity as opposed to developing the quality of writing for different groups. In a mathematics lesson for older pupils, the teacher had revised her planning on equivalent fractions to ensure that every pupil understood the terms numerator and denominator before attempting activities matched to ability. The lesson progressed at a rapid pace with all pupils involved. Mini whiteboards were used to good effect to constantly check pupils' understanding and move learning forward. However, this was not seen consistently across the school. Pupils' books show that some teachers are using marking well to model correct methods for calculations and to develop pupils' calculation strategies but again this good practice is not yet fully embedded across the school.

There is a positive climate for learning in all classes and a direct link between the progress pupils make and the match of activities to abilities in lessons based on previous learning.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of the teaching and the use of assessment so that there is greater proportion of good or better learning in lessons – satisfactory

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

The executive headteacher is a high profile figure around the school. Parents and carers know him well and along with the head of school he is often seen on the playground before school talking with them. The executive headteacher and the head of school have formed a close-knit team who have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to move the school forward at the necessary accelerated pace. They carry out rigorous and regular monitoring of teaching and learning across the school and are accurate in their assessments of where teaching is good and where it needs more improvement. The head of school has ensured that the turnover of staff has not slowed the progress the school is making. There has been a seamless start to the term with all new staff settling into their new classes very quickly due to good induction procedures. The raising attainment plan developed by the senior leaders is detailed, contains small step improvements and is rigorously monitored. The new tracking systems are comprehensive and enable senior leaders to identify underachievement quickly and plan catch-up sessions. It is also used as a tool to drive improvement and raise expectations. The head of school has introduced new procedures to raise the profile of good progress in the school and pupils who are making more than expected progress are identified and a 'good progress' postcard is sent to parents and carers in the post.

The self-evaluation carried out by senior leaders is accurate and they are aware of the need to strengthen their capacity to improve further by involving more staff members in driving improvements and in taking a bigger lead on some whole-school issues. Currently, some senior leaders are not fully involved in monitoring teaching and learning and new subject leaders need more opportunities to develop their management skills.

There has been good improvement in developing the school's community cohesion action plan and in embedding this across the curriculum. Senior leaders have ensured that pupils are developing their understanding of differences within their local community and beyond. The curriculum now better meets pupils' needs and there are clear plans in place to develop the curriculum further through the use of information and communication technology which is currently underdeveloped.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers, including the governing body – good

### **External support**

The high school supports the school well and links between the two schools and the 'learning links' extended services team continue to improve the communication with and confidence of parents and carers as is evident in the steadily increasing numbers on roll. The IEB is knowledgeable and plays an important role within the school. It has ensured that staffing in the school is now stable with the appointment of senior leaders and many substantive experienced teachers who bring a raft of different expertise to the school. Their monitoring is rigorous and they have overcome some considerable barriers to improvement since the last visit. The shadow governing body are continuing to develop their skills and have attended a wide range of local authority training. They meet regularly and the local authority is in the process of devising strategies to enable them to become further involved in the governance of the school prior to the IEB exit strategy. The local authority continues to give a high level of support to the school, both through the IEB and through consultant support for the new senior leaders where necessary. There are developing plans to decrease this support over the next two terms.