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9 December 2011

Mrs Ford
Headteacher
Usworth Grange Primary School
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Tyne and Wear
NE37 3BG

Dear Mrs Ford

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Usworth Grange Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 December 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 September 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 – good

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 Executive Director of Children's Services for Sunderland.

Yours sincerely,

Moira Fitzpatrick
Additional Inspector

September 2011



Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science so that it is consistently good throughout the school by:
 - urgently reviewing the needs of those pupils who are potentially vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those currently educated in the attached unit, and taking action to effectively meet these needs
 - using information from the tracking of pupils' progress to identify underachievement and to plan interventions which quickly help pupils to make up lost ground
 - ensuring that the curriculum is planned in a way which progressively develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills
 - providing boys with a curriculum which engages them fully in learning.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - improving teachers' ability to accurately assess pupils' attainment
 - ensuring that the resulting information is used to plan challenging tasks for all groups of pupils
 - closely monitoring pupils' work in lessons in order to provide further support or challenge
 - giving pupils detailed guidance on how to improve their work through the use of targets and feedback from marking.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body in driving improvement by:
 - thoroughly evaluating all aspects of the school's work
 - ensuring pupils' progress is accurately assessed, rigorously monitored and thoroughly analysed
 - holding teachers fully to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes
 - taking action to improve the skills of leaders at all levels so that they play a full part in improving their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring the governing body monitors and evaluates the work of the school and challenges more rigorously the standards attained.

Special measures: monitoring of Usworth Grange Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 December 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and observed teaching and learning in nine lessons. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work in books and examined the school's data on pupils' progress and attainment. She held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. The inspector held discussions with groups of parents and carers, members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and two senior school improvement officers from the local authority, including the officer responsible for special educational needs provision.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, two new members of staff have been appointed to the unit for pupils with special educational needs; a new leader has been appointed to the Early Years Foundation Stage; a long-term supply teacher has been appointed to Year 1 to cover the absence of a permanent member of staff, and a short-term supply teacher has been appointed to Year 4 to cover the absence of another member of staff. The school has entered into a formal partnership with a local school for professional development opportunities and has reduced the support it receives from the local authority.

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

Results in national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2011 were close to the national average in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was more than double that in previous test results, while the proportion making the expected progress from Year 2 to Year 6 exceeded the national average. This steep rise in pupils' attainment and progress is the result of rapidly improving assessment systems. For example, pupil progress meetings are embedding well and are being used more effectively to target any potential underachievement. When this occurs prompt remedial action is taken to support pupils to catch up. This rigorous approach is driving improvement in progress and attainment and is key to the school closing gaps between groups of pupils. The clear focus on providing boys with curricular opportunities that interest and engage them is having a notable effect on their enthusiasm for lessons and their rates of progress, particularly in English and mathematics. School data and work in pupils' books show that progress is accelerating in nearly every class so that the vast majority of pupils are regularly meeting their targets. Pupils are responding promptly and positively to advice on how to improve their work. Presentation of work is neat and improving because of the whole-school focus on this. While attainment at the end of Year 2 is still below the expected level, pupils' progress from their starting points at the end of the Reception Year is improving at a good rate.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in main stream classes are making similar progress to their peers because of improvements to teachers' planning and the effective deployment of well-trained support staff. These pupils are developing confidence because they are encouraged to work independently and enjoy the fruits of their hard work.

Pupils in the special educational needs unit are making quicker and more secure progress because staffing has stabilised this term. Stable staffing is providing continuity and progression for their learning, which has been adversely affected by frequent changes of staff in the last year. Pupils in the unit feel safe and secure because staff know them as individuals and have formed warm, supportive relationships with them. Staff have developed personalised learning pathways which allow pupils to recognise the progress they are now making. The sense of success that this brings is firing pupils' confidence and curiosity. Parents and carers with children in the unit spoke of their delight at the improvements to their children's confidence and attitude since the beginning of this term. Frequent pupil progress meetings with the SENCo give senior leaders a clear picture of where there are still gaps in provision for individuals or groups. They have identified that more advice and training are needed for the recently appointed staff, so that they can better promote language development and social skills among the pupils. Recent discussions with the local authority have identified a range of opportunities to tackle this situation.

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

- accelerate pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science so that it is consistently good throughout the school – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour is now much better in and out of the classroom. It makes a positive contribution to learning, because classrooms are calm places where everyone follows the Golden Rules. Pupils say they feel safe in school, they know that bullying is not tolerated and they trust adults to listen to and resolve any problems. Older pupils report that behaviour has improved greatly in the last year and that there is a much calmer atmosphere in the playground because the rules are well known and followed now. These improved outcomes and provision for pupils' well-being are the result of significant improvements to the quality of care, guidance and support, for example, in ensuring that school policies and procedures are rigorously followed by all staff. Older pupils are delighted with the many roles and responsibilities they have which help them to improve the school and to look after younger children at break and lunchtimes.

The effectiveness of provision

Lesson monitoring by senior and middle leaders, observations during the inspection visit and the improving progress evident in most books all testify to continued and accelerating improvements to teaching. The quality of teaching continues to improve because the school's systems are more consistently applied. This is reflected in improvements to teachers' planning, assessment and marking. Supply staff are being supported by colleagues

to adopt the school's practices, which further ensure the consistency of practice across the school. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, and of their ability to persevere with tasks, are continually rising as assessment practices embed, giving them a clear, up-to-date picture of pupils' needs. Teachers' assessments of learning are regular, rigorous and increasingly accurate. Improvements to teachers' questioning skills are alerting staff to when pupils need additional support or challenge in their work. A good example was in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, where more-able pupils were promptly moved on to new work when the teacher recognised they could manage a higher level of challenge. Teachers' marking and feedback on pupils' work pinpoints with increasing accuracy what it is that each pupil needs to do to improve. Scrutiny of pupils' books showed that staff are increasingly checking that pupils act on their advice and do improve their work.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the curriculum is being developed to match pupils' needs more closely and extend opportunities to consolidate and practise basic skills. Older boys spoke with enthusiasm of the access they now have to computer technology for learning and emphasised how well it allowed them to learn independently and follow their own lines of enquiry. Curriculum topics are chosen with care and are increasing the motivation of all pupils, but especially boys, for reading and writing. For example, Year 6 showed great concentration and understanding of the problems of war when reading texts linked to their study of the Second World War.

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

- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring visit, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have succeeded in having every pupil in the attached special educational needs unit assessed for a statement of special educational needs. This has allowed staff new to the unit to plan more closely for pupils' individual needs, which is accelerating their progress and improving their sense of well-being. Senior leaders have established clear accountability for staff with respect to pupils' progress and regular progress meetings are improving outcomes for pupils at a good rate. Whole-school target setting is embedding and becoming increasingly effective in identifying where additional support and challenge are needed. A strong commitment to continuous improvement is developing because all staff feel well supported by senior and middle leaders. Subject leaders for English and mathematics follow a tight timetable of monitoring activities, which give them a clear picture of what is working well and where further improvement is needed. Links with a local school to provide professional development for staff are improving their reflective practices so that they are becoming increasingly self-critical and able to identify their own areas for improvement.

The governing body has increased its skills in monitoring and challenging the school – this has been further developed since the last monitoring inspection through links with subject leaders for different aspects of provision. Members of the governing body are better informed about the school and more aware of where differences in quality of provision exist,



as a result of their sharply focused monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, they recognise that provision in the special educational needs unit is in need of further development to meet the wide ranging needs of its pupils.

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

- improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body in driving improvement – good

External support

The local authority has provided specific, well-targeted and effective support since the previous monitoring inspection. This has had a positive impact on developing consistent practices in teaching and teachers' use of assessment. While the local authority recognises that the school is increasing its capacity to manage its own improvement, it acknowledges the need for continued specific support. For example, recent discussions with the school have identified the need for some sharing of local authority expertise on speech and language development with staff in the special educational needs unit to enable them to meet the needs more fully of pupils there. The local authority has begun to step back from much direct support as it recognises the school is becoming more self-sufficient and skilled and is managing more improvement from within its own resources.