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22 March 2012

Mrs J Sword
Headteacher
St Paul's CofE Primary School
Victoria Street
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE4 7JU

Dear Mrs Sword

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Paul's CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Gordon Potter, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 March 2012, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2011. 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

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 Newcastle upon Tyne.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011

- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress across the school by:
 - ensuring all teachers use their knowledge of where pupils are at in their learning to plan and deliver lessons that more closely match the needs of all groups and individuals
 - providing an appropriate balance between learning that is teacher-led and that which allows pupils to engage practically and work independently
 - planning opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their basic skills within a range of contexts and subjects of the curriculum
 - applying the marking policy consistently so that all pupils know where they are in their learning, what they need to do next to improve and have sufficient time to act upon their teacher’s advice.

- Improve the impact of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, on pupils’ achievement by:
 - ensuring school development planning includes clearly measurable outcomes, within defined timescales, so that the impact of improvement initiatives on pupil outcomes can be measured
 - implementing a rigorous monitoring and evaluation timetable so that the impact of initiatives to improve provision and outcomes are clearly known
 - increasing the involvement of subject leaders and providing them with more opportunities to monitor the quality of provision and tackle weaknesses within their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring the governing body holds the school to account and is more rigorously involved in the evaluation of provision and outcomes.

- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children get off to the best possible start in their learning by:
 - using observations and assessments of children’s learning to plan tasks which meet their individual learning needs and interests
 - planning opportunities for greater adult–child interaction during those activities which children choose for themselves
 - involving children in making decisions about their own learning
 - ensuring continuity, progression and equality of opportunity for all children of Nursery and Reception age.

- Improve pupils’ attendance by engaging more with parents and carers to ensure that their children attend regularly so they do not miss out on learning.



Special measures: monitoring of St Paul's CofE Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 March 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader from the partner school and groups of pupils from Key Stage 2.

Context

There have been a number of changes since the inspection. Two members of staff have been on long-term sickness leave; one returning at the beginning of the week of this visit. The senior leadership team has been extended to include the subject leader for mathematics and the addition of a Key Stage 1 leader. School leaders are receiving support and challenge from local authority officers, an executive headteacher from a local federation of primary schools, who is also a National Leader of Education, an Early Years Foundation Stage teacher from the same federation and an external consultant. Following the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have been set by ability for their mathematics lessons. Afternoon break has ceased in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that pupils spend more time in lessons, particularly focusing on literacy and communication skills.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the inspection, leaders have implemented more systematic tracking of pupils' progress. This information, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books show the progress of all groups of pupils is accelerating in lessons; particularly for Year 5 pupils. Although Year 6 pupils are making better progress, their current attainment is lower than average due to their very low starting points on entry into Key Stage 2. Pupils from ethnic minority communities continue to make faster progress than other pupils but the gap is narrowing, as is the gap between girls and boys, especially in English. Improvements are not least due to improvements in the quality of teaching and the range of actions taken by leaders to make sure pupils who are at risk of underachieving are identified quickly so that additional interventions can be implemented in lessons or when necessary, small group work. Daily sessions on the sounds that letters make, to groups of pupils set by their current abilities are contributing to a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading, although the school is aware that groups need to be smaller to enable more targeted work and hasten progress further.

With good support and guidance from the local authority and the partner primary school, provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving. Reception and Nursery classes provide an equally rich environment in which children can learn and play and are seen to enjoy. Although the outside area is small, a good range of materials,



equipment and experiences extend children's learning and development effectively. Activities are planned to ensure a balance of children's independent decision making and teacher-led activities. Teaching staff and adults scan the indoor and outdoor area regularly to make sure they capitalise on opportunities to draw children into discussion on their own chosen activities, to stretch their thinking and learning further but they do not always record key outcomes. Teachers' assessment of children's progress is increasingly being used to plan work to meet their individual needs and interests. Current assessments show more children are reaching expected levels in their learning and development. However, assessment systems across the two classes are different and it is, therefore, hard to track progress and achievements over the two years children spend in the setting. Learning journals are beginning to be used to celebrate children's achievements and demonstrate their progress but are still in the early stages of development.

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

- raise attainment and improve rates of progress across the school – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

Regular monitoring of teaching by senior and middle leaders, training and individual support to teachers where necessary and learning from the good practice of other schools are improving the quality of teaching. This is helping more pupils to make faster progress in lessons. Good relations between pupils and adults and pupils' very positive attitudes to learning typified all lessons observed. Lesson planning is more consistent. In good lessons, teachers plan different tasks and use classroom assistants and intervention teachers to work with small groups successfully. Teachers use the assessment information they have about pupils' current achievements to plan tasks matched to their different abilities. In satisfactory lessons, teachers are not using this assessment information well enough and pupils often end up doing the same activities which are too easy for some and too difficult for others. In good lessons teachers explain what pupils need to do quickly, enabling them to get on with their independent learning, partner or group work. Occasionally, in satisfactory lessons pupils listen to teachers for too long a time. All teachers mark pupils' work regularly. The best marking gives pupils clear advice on what to do to improve and time for them to follow the guidance provided but this approach is not consistent across the school. Additionally, although pupils speak confidently about how marking is helpful in identifying what they need to correct and, therefore, do better next time, many are unclear about their targets and what actions they need to take to proceed to the next level. This is because not all teachers share this information with pupils. Pupils report that they have more opportunities to extend their literacy skills in subjects beyond English. They particularly value the links in history and the opportunities to write for a purpose in science.



Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they feel safe in this friendly school where pupils from many different cultures work and play together harmoniously. They behave well and are polite and considerate of each other, adults and visitors to school. They value the approach taken by teachers to manage behaviour and think the improved approach is fair and consistent. Attitudes to learning are consistently positive and when teaching is good and teachers are enthusiastic, it makes an even greater difference to pupils' interest and enjoyment. Through a wide range of actions leaders are successfully giving coherent messages about their high expectations of attendance to pupils and parents. Leaders are working closely with families where absence is a particular concern and this is successfully helping to reduce the proportion of pupils absent for long periods. Pupils speak positively about how celebrations, awards and the 'traffic light system' for recording attendance are helping them to strive to attend regularly. As a result of concerted actions, attendance has improved from well-below average to average.

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

- improve pupils' attendance by engaging more with parents and carers to ensure that their children attend regularly so they do not miss out on learning – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have motivated staff to rise to the challenge of a speedy removal of special measures. School development planning is based on accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. It involves all staff and the governing body and includes clear actions and measurable targets to tackle the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. Improved assessment procedures and regular progress review meetings between senior leaders and teachers provide the recently extended leadership team with a better understanding of how well pupils are progressing and to hold staff to account more successfully for pupils' achievements. A cycle of regular monitoring of lessons, planning and scrutiny of pupils' work has been implemented involving both senior and middle leaders. Improvement points identified as a result of such work are helping to add greater consistency to the quality of teaching and to improving pupils' progress. However, sometimes lesson observations are not sufficiently focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, particularly whether activities are matched well enough to ensure all pupils can make rapid progress from their individual starting points. The governing body has increasingly regular, detailed information on the progress and achievements of classes and groups of pupils, such as those entitled to free school meals, pupils from ethnic minority communities, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This is adding to the governing body's understanding of the achievements of different groups and enabling it to challenge where there are any unidentified groups causing concern. A curriculum committee has been reconstituted. It meets in between whole governing body meetings to oversee the school's improvements



more closely and hold senior leaders and staff to account more regularly for the impact of the actions they are taking.

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

- improve the impact of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, on pupils' achievement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority's statement of action was judged fit for purpose when evaluated by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in November. This and a recent plan funded by the National College of School Leadership set out clearly the actions local authority officers, the external consultant, the partner school's headteacher and Early Years Foundation Stage teacher will take, to support and challenge the leadership team to tackle successfully the areas identified for improvement at the time of the inspection. Plans are underpinned by measurable targets and progress is monitored regularly. The support and challenge provided are valued by school staff. These are successfully supporting leaders' drive to raise pupils' achievement and building their capacity to improve the school further.

