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15 June 2012

Mrs S Mitchell
Executive Headteacher
Hugo Meynell CofE (VC) Primary School
Eccleshall Road
Loggerheads
Market Drayton
TF9 4NU

Dear Mrs Mitchell

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hugo Meynell CofE (VC)
Primary School**

Following my visit with Doreen Davenport, Additional Inspector to your school on 13–14 June 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 February 2012. 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 should 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 Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire and the Diocesan Director of Education for Lichfield Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012.

Make sure all pupils achieve good or better progress in their learning by:

- eliminating any inadequate teaching by December 2012
- ensuring teachers make effective use of assessment information, in order to provide work at the right level for pupils of all abilities
- ensuring teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage all pupils' active engagement throughout the lesson
- improving teachers' knowledge of teaching about the sounds letters make (phonics), guided reading and writing
- providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and mathematical skills across different subjects
- giving written feedback to pupils that provides them with clear guidance on what they need to improve their work.

Improve leadership and management by:

- establishing a rigorous cycle of checking teachers' planning, work in pupils' books and the progress pupils make
- improving tracking systems to determine the progress made by each pupil from the beginning of each key stage, the start of a school year and term by term
- improving performance management processes and making staff accountable for meeting challenging performance targets in relation to the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- implementing a curriculum that supports the systematic development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in all National Curriculum subjects
- developing the skills of all those with leadership responsibility, including the governing body, to support effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

Ensure the governing body meets all statutory requirements by agreeing and regularly reviewing all statutory policies and procedures, especially those for safeguarding.

Special measures: monitoring of Hugo Meynell CofE (VC) Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 June 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the executive headteacher, a representative of the local authority, and a group of pupils.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2012, a number of substantial changes affecting governance and senior leadership have occurred, which are described in more detail in the relevant paragraph below. An Interim Executive Board took control in May 2012, together with an executive headteacher from Seabridge Primary school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

At this visit, pupils' progress in the majority of lessons was satisfactory, with some examples of good achievement, particularly in Reception and Key Stage 1. There remains a lack of challenge for more able pupils in many of the lesson seen. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs were learning satisfactorily, once they could start on activities; they then received good support from both teachers and teaching assistants. Once given high quality teaching, pupils rise to the demands with joy and enthusiasm; for example, in an outstanding lesson in Years 1 and 2 focusing on learning to write in an appropriate style for 'giving information', pupils had to find out for themselves key characteristics of typical informative texts, using a few starting ideas from the teacher. The next phase required them to give instructions to the teacher on how to put on a coat; as pupils had a go, it dawned on them how precise the instructions needed to be, chuckling together as the teacher acted out their advice, literally! This approach really engaged pupils very well.

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

- Make sure all pupils achieve good or better progress in their learning – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Almost all the 19 lessons seen were satisfactory and about half were good or better. The better lessons had tasks prepared for pupils that matched their ability and prior knowledge, and then teachers ensured pupils started individual work promptly. Teachers kept an astute focus on how well individual pupils were learning, making adjustments on a one-to-one basis as the activities progressed. This differentiation

by ability was not obvious in the written planning, but was occurring very well in practice in these good lessons. All lessons included a range of stimulating materials and good ways to engage students' interest. Two of the three phonics sessions observed were better than satisfactory.

Where teaching was not so good, teachers were spending far too long in discussion with the whole class. The impact of the good stimulus of the starting activity was therefore diluted, so by the time pupils actually started the main task for themselves, they had been passively listening for some time. These whole class 'discussions', as described in teaching plans, were not effectively adapted to the very wide range of attainment indicated in the planning documentation, so most pupils could not participate fully. Teachers in these lessons were controlling the pace and challenge for everyone to the extent that pupils had little scope for independent work. There were some examples of pupils applying their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, for example in a science lesson related to pulse rate and exercise.

Marking shows early signs of developing informative feedback to pupils. As yet, most is too vague for pupils to carry out easily, but one good example, 'Now put in the full stops using red crayon,' showed what is meant by 'next step' feedback.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Eliminating any inadequate teaching by December 2012 – satisfactory.
- Ensuring teachers make effective use of assessment information, in order to provide work at the right level for pupils of all abilities – satisfactory.
- Ensuring teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage all pupils' active engagement throughout the lesson – satisfactory.
- Improving teachers' knowledge of teaching about the sounds letters make (phonics), guided reading and writing – satisfactory.
- Providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing and mathematical skills across different subjects – satisfactory.
- Giving written feedback to pupils that provides them with clear guidance on what they need to improve their work – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During this visit pupils behaved well, inside and outside of the classroom, and were polite towards each other, staff and visitors. They remained patient in lessons even when having to wait to get started, and showed a lively natural inquisitiveness that the best teaching was exploiting well. In discussion, pupils recognised that lessons

are getting better, and that the school is looking nicer inside thanks to a concerted effort to make new displays of pupils' work. They sometimes felt they did not have enough time to think about answers in the whole class discussions before someone jumped in with the correct one.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Following the inspection in February 2012, the school, with the help of the local authority, implemented an action plan that included the secondment of an experienced headteacher from a school in the south of the county. Through effective monitoring of the impact of these arrangements, it became apparent that the identified weaknesses were not likely to be resolved quickly enough. The headteacher appointed for September 2012 withdrew. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned, with no one prepared to take on the role. Therefore, in early May 2012, the local authority took decisive action by establishing an Interim Executive Board comprising four members. They have already begun to address weaknesses in previous governance, with action to support performance management of teachers. The extent of the provisional partnership arrangement with Seabridge Primary school has increased. The Seabridge headteacher assumed executive headteacher responsibility for Hugo Meynell school, taking over from the initial arrangement.

The executive headteacher has begun the process of introducing a progress tracking system and promoting the professional development of teachers through peer observations in her own school. She has embarked on training middle managers in monitoring and evaluation, and initiated moderation of teacher assessments. A computer-based system for tracking pupil progress is being installed, although the executive headteacher is cautious about the reliability of some earlier teacher assessments of attainment, on which such a system depends. The partnership with Seabridge has led to substantial professional development opportunities for staff to observe and discuss good teaching. Already, the quality of teaching overall has improved. Robust performance management has begun with some staff, leading to informal and formal capability procedures commencing. As yet, little work has been done in curriculum review, but teachers are now trying, with some success, to make tasks more interesting.

Until the return to duty by the substantive deputy headteacher, senior leadership duties are currently being carried out by the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher of Seabridge Primary school. Policy review is pending the establishment of a long-term governing body. In practice, procedures for safeguarding children are now satisfactory.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Establishing a rigorous cycle of checking teachers' planning, work in pupils' books and the progress pupils make – satisfactory.

- Improving tracking systems to determine the progress made by each pupil from the beginning of each key stage, the start of a school year and term by term – satisfactory.
- Improving performance management processes and making staff accountable for meeting challenging performance targets in relation to the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics – good.
- Implementing a curriculum that supports the systematic development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in all National Curriculum subjects – satisfactory.
- Developing the skills of all those with leadership responsibility, including the governing body, to support effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's work – good.
- Ensure the governing body meets all statutory requirements by agreeing and regularly reviewing all statutory policies and procedures, especially those for safeguarding – satisfactory.

External support

The external support for the school, by both the local authority and Seabridge Primary school, is good. The rapid changes in strategic leadership effectively directed by the local authority in May have quickly led to early signs of improvements in teaching and learning and leadership and management. The Chair of the Interim Executive Board and executive headteacher have a clear understanding of what still needs to be done, and demonstrate determination and track record in acting swiftly to effect improvement. The original local authority action plan has been superseded by events, which on the ground are progressing at a good pace. The recently-appointed Interim Executive Board should revisit the action plan in the light of recent events, and consider the suggestion by Ofsted of including some measurable 'mileposts' that will help track improvement over time.