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8 March 2013

Mrs Sue Cornall
Headteacher
Highfield Primary School
Wright Street
Chorley
Lancashire
PR6 0SP

Dear Mrs Cornall

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Highfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 March 2013, 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 November 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 for Children & Young People for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James

Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and thus raise pupils' attainment and achievement in all subjects, and particularly in writing, by:
 - making sure pupils know precisely how well they are doing in their work and know what to do in order to improve it
 - improving teachers' lesson planning and the use of adult support to ensure that the abilities and interests of each pupil are met
 - providing sufficient challenge in lessons to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - taking effective measures to monitor and improve the quality of teaching
 - improving the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures to accurately measure the impact of the school's actions
 - raising expectations of pupils' performance throughout the school
 - ensuring that the governing body challenges the school to address weaknesses and sustain improvement
 - rigorously applying systems and engaging with parents and carers to improve attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of Highfield Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 March 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection an additional teacher has been brought in to support the teaching of Year 6.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School assessment data indicates that rates of progress in-year are improving and that increasing proportions of pupils are on track to reach age-related expectations. The picture is not even across the school and there are pockets of slower progress and lower attainment. Standards of work in pupils' books are improving, although there remains considerable variation in standards. Work in books is better presented but handwriting and the legibility of letters and numbers continue to be an issue for some pupils. Spelling remains a weakness for many pupils. Grammar and sentence structure are also weak, especially for some older pupils. There are examples of better quality work, including some that is of above average standards.

In Year 6 an additional teacher from a local successful school has been brought in to provide additional support including, for example, booster classes for the less-able pupils. This is helping to close gaps in Year 6 pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result of good teaching pupil progress in Year 6, in particular, is accelerating. The most recent school assessment data suggests that the current Year 6 should reach higher standards by the end of the year than those achieved by the 2012 cohort and scrutiny of pupils' books supports this. Lower down the school there is a broadly improving picture in terms of standards of work as pupils are catching up and gaps in knowledge and understanding are less evident than in upper Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, there are still some variations in standards among younger pupils.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving, although it is not consistently good and there remain occasional inadequate lessons. The pace in lessons is increasing and less time is wasted as transitions between activities are better managed by teachers. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving and pupils are developing better independent learning skills, showing increasing

perseverance and producing more work. Teachers' questioning is usually directed at individuals and is becoming more effective, for example, by the use of supplementary questions to encourage pupils to offer additional information. Teachers are making more use of strategies such as talk partners to involve pupils better in teacher led sessions. Strategies such as writing and showing answers on mini whiteboards are increasingly used to check the understanding of all pupils, rather than questions to a few individuals. Teachers' skill in using a variety of methods varies but, overall, improvement is evident.

The work set in lessons is now better matched to pupils' abilities, but there are occasions where more-able pupils could be stretched or challenged more. Conversely, less-able pupils are occasionally given work too difficult to tackle independently resulting in teaching assistants doing too much for them. This is not typical, however, and the support provided by teaching assistants is increasingly well targeted and effective. Teachers are becoming more adept at monitoring individual progress in lessons and adapting the work set in the light of pupils' response, although examples were observed where this was less successful. Teachers continue to promote personal development effectively, encouraging confidence and self-esteem, which in turn is helping to increase motivation.

Written feedback on pupils' work is becoming more constructive and many teachers are allocating specific times for pupils to act on comments and make corrections and improvements. There is some variation in practice with some teachers giving clearer and more explicit feedback than others. Some books show more evidence of pupil follow up of comments than others. Occasional marking errors were seen. Pupils know their targets which are in the front of their books. These are being reviewed more regularly and there are clearer criteria for determining when they have been achieved to ensure that pupils' skills are properly consolidated.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and thus raise pupils' attainment and achievement in all subjects, and particularly in writing – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to be friendly, cooperative and welcoming. Relationships are good and pupils' interactions with adults and each other are mostly positive. As teachers' expectations rise, attitudes to learning are improving. There is more evidence of pupils developing a better work ethic, for example, by concentrating better and producing longer pieces of written work. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their attendance which continues to improve. Although the number of persistent absentees is above average, the large majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management have been strengthened by the work of the recently appointed English and mathematics coordinators. Monitoring of the school's work by leaders is

increasingly carefully planned and thorough. The English coordinator responded quickly to issues raised at the last visit, producing a new spelling and presentation policy. She has also worked to improve and develop the teaching of letters and sounds and has purchased new reading materials likely to appeal to boys more. In both English and mathematics the coordinators are now involved in regular and frequent monitoring of teachers' planning and scrutiny of pupils' work. Feedback to teachers is rapid and is documented and followed up. A stronger focus on attainment and the necessity of ensuring that pupils do reach age-related expectations is evident. Senior staff are consistently communicating their high expectations to all teachers, which in turn is helping to raise teacher expectations of what pupils can achieve. The special educational needs coordinator has brought more rigour to the progress tracking of pupils with special educational needs and this is helping to raise expectations of their rates of progress. The management of attendance has improved, especially through the well-targeted work of the learning mentor which is improving communication with parents.

The recent restructuring of Key Stage 1 classes so that Year 1 and Year 2 are taught separately is allowing teachers to focus on a narrower range of abilities. Following the poor outcomes at the end of Year 2 in 2012 the decision to have two relatively small Year 3 classes this year is now beginning to have an impact on the progress of these pupils, although standards are not yet high enough, especially in writing. Pupil premium funding is being used appropriately to support the two small classes as there is a high proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the funding in the year group.

Observations of teaching result in clear feedback to teachers about areas for improvement which are followed up. Support plans are being used where teaching is judged to require improvement. Nevertheless, the school's view of the quality of teaching is still more optimistic than that of inspectors. Regular pupil progress meetings with class teachers are held following the half termly formal assessments to ensure that teachers focus on pupils who are underachieving. The monitoring of the performance of different groups of pupils is becoming more rigorous.

Improvements in the curriculum, particularly in enrichment activities, are helping to increase motivation and some quality work on display reflects pupils' interest and enthusiasm in special events and visits. There is more emphasis on providing more opportunities for written work across the curriculum, although there is scope for further improvement.

The most recent governing body minutes are more detailed than previously and reflect a greater degree of challenge to school leaders. Governors have recognised the need to look at assessment data that reflects pupils' progress over longer periods of time, rather than focusing mainly on in-year progress. Governors have reaffirmed their determination to ensure that performance management procedures are robust and effective in monitoring teacher performance. Discussions about the possible conversion of the school to sponsored academy status have begun and governors have indicated that they are not opposed to such a move in principle.

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

- Improve the leadership and management of the school – satisfactory

External support

The local authority continues to provide much valuable support from a number of personnel, including the school adviser and school improvement adviser. Consultants in literacy, numeracy, teaching and learning, and attendance, have all provided support to various members of school staff. Much moderation has been done to ensure that teachers' levelling of pupil work is accurate. The local authority has negotiated visits to a local outstanding school to enable teachers to observe practice and see the standards of pupils' work, and these are contributing well to the raising of expectations. Governors value the support of local authority personnel and the training they have provided. Local authority advisers have worked closely with the new English and mathematics coordinators and have confidence in the increasing capacity of the school to manage the improvement agenda now that the senior leadership team has been strengthened.