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16 January 2015

Mrs Susan Gill
Headteacher
George Hastwell School
Moor Tarn Lane
Walney Island
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA14 3LW

Dear Mrs Gill

Special measures monitoring inspection of George Hastwell School

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria.

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching across the school so that it is good or better, to ensure pupils make at least good progress in communication, reading, writing and mathematics especially in Key Stages 3 and 4, by:
 - eradicating any inadequate teaching
 - ensuring that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are assessed and recorded accurately throughout the whole school and their progress tracked carefully so that pupils next steps always build well upon what they already know and can do
 - making sure that staff expectations and targets set for pupils' learning are sufficiently challenging, reviewed regularly and extended quickly when they have been met
 - improving the quality of marking and ensuring the advice given to all pupils is appropriate to their needs, so that pupils know what they have done well and how to improve
 - ensuring activities for pupils who find learning very difficult are matched well to their needs in order to develop their skills in all subjects
 - ensuring pupils are provided with more challenging and stimulating work that maintains their interest and is relevant to their needs so that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are always at least good
 - ensuring that teaching assistants fully understand their role in lessons, are clear about the support they must give to ensure pupils of all ages and abilities learn effectively and receive training so that they have the necessary skills to do so
 - providing opportunities for the teachers to share and learn from the very best teaching practices in other schools
 - making sure all members of staff make the best use of curriculum time during the school to promote learning.

- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of governance by:
 - ensuring that governors develop a secure understanding of how well pupils are achieving and an accurate view of the quality of teaching, so that they can help to provide a clear drive for improvement in the areas where it is needed.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 14 to 15 January 2015.

Evidence

The inspector focused on the areas identified as requiring urgent action at his previous special measures monitoring inspection in September 2014. The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, teachers and teaching assistants. The school's action plan was evaluated. Children were also observed learning in six part lessons.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection one additional teacher has been employed on a temporary basis until the end of the summer term.

Plans are in place to convert the school to a sponsored academy with effect from 1 September 2015.

The executive headteacher has given notice to the governing body and the local authority that her term of office will end with effect on 31 March 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Leaders have made effective use of their contacts with other schools in order to strengthen the school's system to record and analyse data which they collect about the achievement of children at George Hastwell. Accurate data about what children can do when they start at the school, along with daily records of children's learning, are used well by most teachers to plan lessons. Consequently, many children were observed making rapid progress in lessons because the activities they were taking part in closely matched their specific needs.

It is difficult to judge the overall rate at which the progress of children has improved because accurate data are not available for the period prior to the inspection. However, leaders' records of their observations and other school records, such as those for behaviour, along with observations during the visit, demonstrate the green shoots of improvement. Children in the early years were observed making the distinction between empty, half full and full in a lesson on capacity; this was swift progress in mathematics. In the sixth form, students were observed taking part in a discussion about a forthcoming residential event, their behaviour was impeccable and they made astute contributions to the discussion at every opportunity. In this example, sixth form students demonstrated excellent personal and social skills and were being well prepared for life after school.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the inspection but remains patchy. Leaders' records, along with the inspector's discussions with teachers and teaching assistants, the scrutiny of children's work and observations of learning, corroborate the executive headteacher's evaluation that a high proportion of teaching is not yet good enough.

Not enough teachers adjust their plans on a daily basis, so that the next lesson can be tailored to reflect the amount of progress made by individual children. In one example of good practice, a teacher had made notes on his plans to revisit rounding up and rounding down with three students who had not grasped the concept in the previous mathematics lesson. However, another teacher missed the opportunity to add learning activities to challenge a more able student to extend his understanding of the use of money. Consequently, the rate at which pupils progress in mathematics and in other subjects across the school remains too variable.

Teachers and adults have established excellent relationships with the children; they know the children well and use this effectively to collect relevant information about the learning of individual children. The whole-school strategy of collecting information about learning as it happens is in place in every classroom. Where this is used well, adults record snippets of information, usually written on post-it notes, which paint a vivid picture of what a child has learned or can do. In some classrooms, this information is collated to produce a record of learning over time. As a result, teachers are in a strong position to improve the quality of their teaching further.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Concerns raised at the previous monitoring inspection, about the management of access into and out of the school, have been eradicated. Entry and exit onto and off the site and out of the building are now managed well. Exit doors and external gates are either locked or supervised at an appropriate level.

The school's own behaviour records, along with the inspector's observations, demonstrate that the behaviour of children is improving. Furthermore, where teaching is at least good and expectations are high, behaviour is often first rate and always contributes positively to learning. For example, in one lesson all adults used appropriate technical language and set high expectations for behaviour. Not a moment was lost as the youngest children in the school moved from one learning activity to another. The attitude to learning of this group of children was exemplary and was matched by their progress in the lesson.

In a small number of instances children still lose interest or become distracted because tasks set, or explanations given by teachers, are not finely tuned to meet

the needs of all children. For example, two boys did not make enough progress in a mathematics lesson because the task set was of little interest to them. In a science lesson a small group of children did not make enough progress because time was lost when they did not work effectively as a group due to imprecise instructions given by the teacher.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher has quite rightly concentrated on ensuring the foundations are laid in order to support the improvements required to move the school forward. The executive headteacher has galvanised the staff team, improved the learning environment, introduced an appropriate structure to record, monitor and evaluate progress and raised the expectations of adults and children at the school. Leaders have taken appropriate action to put systems in place, for example a well-planned programme for the monitoring of learning in lessons, to allow the school to perform effectively.

Leaders have produced an improved action plan which addresses the areas for improvement identified at the last full inspection. The plan has sufficient detail and, consequently, all leaders are clear about the steps identified to improve the school. However, the plan does not give a clear picture of what improvement will look like in relation to pupils' progress for a small number of actions. Governors, therefore, are not yet in a position to hold leaders to account effectively for all of the actions they take.

Leaders have introduced an appropriate system to manage the performance of teachers and teaching assistants. All teachers and teaching assistants are set targets related to the school improvement plan and are given feedback on how well they are meeting their targets. Targets are set which are related to improvements in children's progress and, as a result, adults' expectations of what children can achieve have risen. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of this new regime in relation to children's outcomes as data on children's performance are yet to be analysed fully by leaders.

The effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the learning environment across the school is unquestionable. The whole-school drive to 'declutter' has resulted in hazard-free corridors, usable learning spaces and classrooms which are free from unnecessary distractions. Rooms, which previously posed a significant danger to those at risk of infection, have been cleared, cleaned and, in some cases, reshaped to ensure children can be cared for safely and with dignity.

The governing body has commissioned and undertaken an external review of governance. Governors have produced an appropriate action plan to address the areas for improvement identified in the review. Governors are also clear about how

they will improve their monitoring and evaluation of how the school uses its pupil premium grant (additional government funding).

Due to the short notice given to the school's leaders, very little work has taken place with regards the school's preparation for conversion to an academy. The local authority has identified a possible sponsor. Governors are in discussion with leaders of the proposed sponsor and are yet to set a firm date by which to sign the agreement for conversion.

External support

Leaders have made effective use of their links with good and outstanding schools and a consultant headteacher to ensure their judgements about the quality of learning and teaching are robust. Children across the school have benefited from teachers and teaching assistants sharing training and observing good practice in a good school similar in nature to George Hastwell School. For example, specific training around 'sensory stimulus' has resulted in a change of practice by some staff, which in turn has led to an improvement in the behaviour of a small number of children. In another example, following a visit by all teachers to the good school similar in nature to their own, classrooms have been reorganised to create a purposeful learning environment, which in turn has led to raised expectations and an improvement in children's attitude to learning.

Further action should be taken to ensure that:

- the governing body works closely with the local authority to ensure the quality of leadership and, as a consequence, improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of children currently at the school are not compromised during the conversion to an academy.