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14 May 2015

Mrs Carolyn Singleton  
Acting Headteacher  
George Hastwell School  
Moor Tarn Lane  
Walney Island  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA14 3LW

Dear Mrs Singleton

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of George Hastwell School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 May 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.

This visit was the third 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 appoint up to one newly qualified teacher 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.
  
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so the school can improve rapidly by:
  - improving the tracking of pupils' progress so that the achievement of different pupils groups can be accurately identified and the necessary support quickly put in place to ensure they make the best possible progress
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is checked more rigorously and that feedback to teaching and support staff about how to improve pupils' learning is clear and acted upon
  - improving the robustness of performance management for all staff so that they are held fully to account for pupils' progress
  - establishing links with successful schools in the area in order to improve the skills of leaders to drive improvement
  - developing the roles of key leaders and subject leaders in order to strengthen the ability of the school to improve at a faster rate

- quickly establishing and implementing an effective school improvement plan with clear targets so that improvement is driven forward clearly and at a rapid pace.
- 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 third monitoring inspection on 12 to 13 May 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher along with the deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, a parent, the Chair and vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The school's action plan, along with senior leaders' evaluation of how well the school is progressing, was reviewed. Children were also observed learning in a number of part lessons.

### **Context**

Following the resignation of the executive headteacher, an acting headteacher has been appointed on a temporary basis. A permanent headteacher with experience of schools for children with special educational needs has been appointed with effect from 1 June 2015.

The school has started the process of becoming an academy, with effect from September 2015. The Queen Katherine School Multi Academy Trust has been identified as the sponsor.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Leaders have been successful in strengthening the system to record and analyse data which they collect about the achievement of children at George Hastwell. Leaders' analysis of the school's data shows that progress overall remains patchy across the school. This view is corroborated by leaders' records of their observations of teaching and learning along with the inspector's observations during the inspection.

The green shoots of improvement, seen at the previous monitoring inspection, have continued to push through. Most teachers are beginning to respond quickly where gaps have been identified in pupils' learning or where progress has not been rapid enough. For example, in one lesson observed, the teacher adapted her plans in order to encourage a pupil to participate well in the activity. In another example, the teacher and teaching assistants worked successfully together in order to ensure each pupil in the class was involved in an activity well matched to their specific needs. These pupils were making rapid progress in early writing skills and mathematics.

The inspector's scrutiny of a sample of pupils' workbooks shows that a good proportion of pupils are making better progress than before the inspection. In a small proportion of examples, progress is strong. For instance, evidence of one pupil's work demonstrated that he had progressed from using adverbs in simple sentences to similes in complex sentences. However, on too many occasions, teachers miss the opportunity to challenge the most able pupils by setting additional

tasks to stretch pupils' understanding of what they have just learned. These pupils are not progressing rapidly enough.

Sixth-form students are increasingly well prepared for life beyond school. The school's records of off-site activities demonstrate the large majority of sixth-form students are developing a range of personal and social skills well. One group of students was observed taking part in a board meeting as a means of improving their work-related skills. Students take on roles, such as the spokesperson and scribe, while participating in small-group discussions about past and future 'Team Enterprise' events. A small number of the most able students did not make the progress they were capable of because adults did not provide sufficient opportunity to allow students to solve problems for themselves.

### **The quality of teaching**

Although leaders and teachers have a more accurate picture of what pupils can do, particularly in mathematics and English, not enough teaching is consistently strong. Too much teaching still aims for the middle ground and neither challenges the most able to do better nor encourages the least able to do their best. During the monitoring inspection, too many instances were observed where teachers missed the opportunity to test pupils' mastery of skills. In these examples, the pupils were not required to solve problems for themselves and, consequently, did not make the progress of which they are capable.

However, pockets of good teaching are beginning to shine through. In these examples, pupils' learning is tested because teachers set challenging tasks and teaching assistants probe using skilful questioning. Adults in the classroom resist the temptation to give direct answers to pupils and, consequently, learning progresses rapidly. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were expected to choose their own measuring vessels and conduct their own research to measure volume. These pupils made swift progress both in terms of their accuracy in measuring volume and in their estimating skills.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The management of access into and out of the school has been improved even further. The installation of perimeter fencing around the school provides an appropriate safety barrier for all those at the school. However, systems to monitor the arrival and departure of pupils at the beginning and end of the school day require strengthening. During the inspection, vehicles were observed to be moving while pupils were still in the car park area. This practice is unacceptable and must be resolved immediately.

Pupils' behaviour around and outside the school is without a doubt a strength of George Hastwell School. Pupils arrive in good spirit; they are polite and respond to

the welcome given by all adults in an appropriate and respectful manner. This has the effect of reinforcing the already strong relationships between pupils and adults.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is not yet consistently good. This is due to too many pupils not being given the opportunity to work independently or to solve problems for themselves or in groups. A small proportion of pupils, in all areas of the school, were observed to be bored by activities which were not closely matched to their specific needs. These pupils did not make a strong contribution to the lesson nor the progress of which they were capable.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Swift action by the governors has ensured that they have worked effectively with the local authority and the proposed academy sponsor to employ a strong acting headteacher. The acting headteacher has established a focus on improvements in learning quickly. Consequently, the good work identified in the previous monitoring inspection has been built up on and progress towards the removal of special measures has continued.

Governors have started to give the development of leadership at all levels an appropriate level of priority. For example, the deputy headteacher has received support from a consultant headteacher and has benefited from visits to other good and outstanding schools. As a result, the deputy headteacher has focused on improving key areas, such as behaviour and attendance. These areas are beginning to show signs of an increasing rate of progress.

Improvements in leaders' use of data, particularly relating to students' progress, behaviour and attendance, are evident in the school's own records. Leaders are analysing new data to identify trends and gaps in pupils' learning effectively. This information is being used by leaders in progress meetings with teachers in order to ensure teachers' planning closely matches the specific needs of pupils. It is too early to evaluate the impact of the increased focus on learning because leaders' analysis of overall data is limited due to the lack of comparative data from before the inspection. Nevertheless, the school's records of pupils' attainment show the majority of children across the school are making some progress with a significant minority making rapid progress. This is an improvement from before the inspection.

Governors spoken with are of the opinion that the school is on track to convert to an academy on 1 September 2015.

### **External support**

The governing body has worked effectively with the local authority and the proposed academy sponsor to ensure the quality of leadership and, as a consequence, improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils currently at

the school have not been compromised during the conversion to an academy. This effective partnership work ensured the appointment of a strong acting headteacher and the subsequent appointment of an appropriately experienced permanent headteacher.

**Immediate action should be taken to:**

- improve the safety of pupils as they arrive at and leave the school each day. A systematic approach to managing pupils' transport while on the school site should ensure vehicles' engines are switched off and the school gates are closed while pupils alight or board the vehicles.