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22 February 2008

Mrs E Jackson
Heateacher
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Todholes Road
Cleator Moor
Cumbria
CA25 5DG

Dear Mrs Jackson

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST PATRICK'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit, to your school on 20 February 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2007. 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 – good

Newly qualified teachers may only be appointed with the agreement of the lead inspector.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Diocese of Lancaster and the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood HMI
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 20 February 2008

Evidence

Evidence was taken from observations of the school's work, a scrutiny of documents and meetings with the headteacher, senior teachers, the governors and the school's improvement officer. Information was also gathered from talking to pupils and by observing the school's procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and giving feedback to staff.

Context

Since the previous visit there have been no changes to staffing. Two new consultants for literacy and numeracy have been appointed by the local authority (LA). The governing body has increased in size following the appointment of an additional governor and a new clerk to the governors has joined the team.

Achievement and standards

Standards in all core areas are below the national average at age seven and slightly above average at age eleven, as reflected in the most recent teacher assessments and national tests for 2007. Nevertheless, pupils' current work, together with the school's own assessment information suggests that pupils are making better progress than previously. This is because the school has strengthened the way it monitors pupils' performance and as a result, has a much clearer understanding of where improvement is required. Furthermore, the school's initiatives for raising achievement are paying greater dividends. For example, pupils are making better progress in writing because of a whole-school focus on the moderation of their written work. Staff are taking greater responsibility for their actions and act more decisively in their analysis of data. Tracking systems are far more effective in identifying pupils who are underachieving. As a consequence, support and intervention is planned more appropriately and staff have a greater awareness of the needs of individual learners. In addition, increased opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge in lesson activities are leading to a faster rate of achievement, particularly in mathematics and science.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Raise standards in writing, mathematics and science –satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' good personal development is related directly to the strong family atmosphere in school and supports their progress well. Pupils behave well, are caring and considerate towards each other and are keen to succeed. They enjoy school a great deal, which is demonstrated by their positive attitudes to their work and by their enthusiasm for the wide range of activities that the school provides.

Quality of provision

Lessons observations conducted jointly by HMI with senior staff, confirm that the quality of teaching is improving. Teaching is now mainly good with some that is satisfactory which means that pupils are making better progress in their work. This has come about because teachers have improved their use of data about pupils' prior attainment. Lessons are increasingly focused on individual needs with interesting activities that build well on prior knowledge and engage pupils in lively and stimulating debate. 'Literacy is fun when we get the chance to move around the classroom and talk to others about what we are learning,' was a typical pupil remark. Others commented 'We like science now because we do lots of experiments'. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are encouraged to test and deepen their understanding with carefully crafted opportunities that promote high levels of discussion and independent thinking. Expectations are high, the pace of learning is brisk and as a result, pupils are engrossed in their work and make good progress.

Nevertheless, whilst most teaching has a significant number of strengths, these are not present in all lessons. Opportunities for pupils to think and make decisions about how they learn for themselves or to think of different ways to tackle their work are not always encouraged. Pupils' work is sometimes over directed and opportunities are missed for pupils to take responsibility for their learning. In addition, the questioning of higher attaining pupils by some teachers could be more sharply focused.

The marking of pupils' work is improving. There are some good examples of where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach the next level. The best examples are from teachers who have a clear understanding of how pupils learn effectively. However, the quality of marking is sometimes variable and is not consistent in some classes. The introduction of targets has given the pupils a sharper focus but teachers do not always refer to them well enough in lessons or when marking pupils' work.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Improve the quality of teaching, and in particular ensure assessment information is used to plan learning which challenges all pupils – good
- Improve the quality of marking so pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leadership team have continued to work diligently in addressing the school's weaknesses and in devising ways to improve further. The headteacher provides a steady steer for the school and has generated a strong momentum for improvement. She remains forthright in her desire to develop the skills of the leadership team further by empowering its members to make their own decisions and take even greater responsibility. She is passionate about developing pupils' learning and has inspired staff and governors to make positive changes. As a result, morale is high, teamwork is strong and staff are forward thinking and reflective. They are well aware of their responsibilities, are increasingly accountable for their work and possess a good understanding of the school's position.

Governors are far more skilled in their role as improvement partners and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. The approach of linking governors to each key issue has ensured that they provide good levels of challenge and are involved in evaluating how well the school is performing.

There have been good improvements in the way that the school monitors its performance, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning. This is because the school has successfully introduced several strategies to inform teaching and learning, which in turn are leading to improvements in classroom practice. For example, lesson observations by senior staff focus routinely on the progress made by pupils in each class and teachers are provided with clear targets to improve their performance in all areas of their work. Feedback to staff is accurate, supportive and constructive. The outcomes of work scrutiny and the views of pupils are also taken into account. Strong support is provided by senior leaders in demonstrating good practice and in coaching and supporting less confident and experienced colleagues. As a consequence, teachers have been willing to take on new initiatives and have an increasing awareness of what constitutes effective learning.

The school has made significant steps in its planning for improvement. Plans are well focused on raising achievement further and benefit from the outcomes of regular reviews and whole staff discussions. Teachers routinely use assessments to set and review targets for pupils to inform their learning. However, the school is aware that there are some inconsistencies in the way that individual targets are set which means that on occasions there is a variation in the challenge for some pupils, particularly the more able.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2007:

- Ensure leaders and managers effectively monitor all aspects of the school and particularly the quality of teaching and learning – good
- Make planning for school improvement more rigorous, particularly in setting challenging learning targets for all classes – satisfactory

External support

The LA continues to assist the school well, through the work of the school improvement officer, specialist advisers and through the effective support of the Intensifying Support Programme consultant. As a result, there is clear agreement on the agenda for improvement and where further work is still required.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure greater consistency in the setting of individual learning targets and in the marking of pupils' work.