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Mrs Paula Bailey  
Headteacher  
Blaydon West Primary School  
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NE21 4PY

Dear Mrs Bailey

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blaydon West Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 February 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection is satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the school providing support from an appropriate external source.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Gateshead.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Shepherd  
Additional Inspector

## Special measures: monitoring of Blaydon West Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 February 2009

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including observations of lessons, an assembly and behaviour in lessons, around the school and at playtimes. The inspector scrutinised documents, samples of pupils' work from each class and analysed school data. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, some co-ordinators, the interim executive board (IEB) the chair and members of the shadow governing body.

### Context

The school has had to address a number of challenges related to staffing since the previous visit. One key member of staff has left and one was absent during the visit. Several other members of staff have had long-term or intermittent absences. Two members of staff had only been teaching in the school for three days prior to the inspection.

### Achievement and standards

Observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work show that their progress is at least satisfactory. In Years 2 and 6 pupils make consistently good progress due to well focused teaching that matches different pupils' needs well. Consequently, pupils in Year 6 are currently on track to reach their targets by the end of the year. This continues the upward trend in standards in Year 6 in the national tests between the 2007 and 2008 results.

The previous inadequate progress of pupils over time continues to have a negative impact on standards for pupils in some of the older classes. This is not the case in Year 6 where the better quality teaching and learning in this year group is compensating well for the previous inconsistencies of provision. Progress has accelerated in reading since the previous visit with the daily reading sessions providing carefully organised opportunities for pupils to develop basic reading skills and an appreciation of different types of texts. School data show that the proportion of pupils making good progress in mathematics has increased although several pupils are not making enough progress in writing. Progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more consistent than in the previous visit due to the improved systems for identifying their specific needs and the better focused additional support they receive. Progress made by more able pupils varies between different classes. In the best lessons these pupils receive a good level of challenge, but this is not consistent through the school. The inconsistencies in progress between subjects and different groups of pupils is a result of the negative impact of past underachievement and a lack of continuity in teachers.

Observations show that children are making very good progress in the Nursery both indoors and outdoors, because staff support them very effectively across the different areas of learning. School data show that children in Reception have made very good progress since the previous visit, with excellent achievement in personal development.

Despite the staffing challenges, the school has made satisfactory progress since the previous monitoring visit on the priority of raising standards and increasing achievement through providing a better match of work to different pupils' needs. In the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 6 progress is consistently good.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and the majority try hard to complete the tasks that teachers set them and settle well to their work. Their behaviour is good in lessons and they move very sensibly around the large buildings with an understanding of the importance of keeping safe and being considerate to others. Pupils cooperate well with each other when teachers give them the chance to share their work or work together to complete a task. They are very proud when they receive awards for good work.

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory although there continues to be a range in the quality overall. No inadequate teaching was observed during this visit. While this represents an improvement in the overall quality of teaching, it is not sufficiently good enough to tackle fully the legacy of underachievement to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

In the best teaching there is a lively pace, well focused questioning and very effective use of pupils working in pairs to discuss their thinking. Teachers provide imaginative tasks to stimulate pupils' imagination, such as drawing maps to show the narrative of a story, or photographing each other in the role of characters in a story. More able pupils are challenged well both in whole-class sessions and in more difficult independent tasks. In the satisfactory lessons teachers underestimate the capabilities of these pupils.

The majority of established staff present during the inspection use the assessment systems well in their planning. The new analysis of targeted pupils in each class provides a very clear basis for discussions with senior staff, which is then used effectively to target their needs in lessons. The new Year 6 teaching team is working very well together, as is the new Early Years Foundation Stage team. Teachers' very good levels of communication in these teams ensure that there is consistency in the way lessons are organised. Weaknesses in the teaching in the guided reading sessions have been addressed successfully and these sessions now have a clear focus on developing reading skills, with groups of pupils working well independently.

Teachers keep good quality consistent records of pupils' progress in these sessions. The school is now in a good position to extend these strategies across to other aspects of teaching.

The organisation of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is beginning to have an impact on their progress, an improvement since the previous visit. The new recording systems that identify the specific programmes for these pupils linking them to individuals' progress are efficient and well organised.

The curriculum continues to improve. There is a better balance within the subjects of English and mathematics. The introduction of more detailed analysis of data related to the termly testing is providing valuable insights into where there are weaknesses in the curriculum over time. The school is beginning to remedy these weaknesses and there are some very effective examples of curriculum initiatives in English. For example, pupils combined independent writing with producing a whole-class non-fiction book, carrying out research on the internet and in reference books, all with the clear purpose of producing a book for another school. The science curriculum does not include enough investigational work and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in this subject. The school is extending its ICT curriculum to ensure that staff in cover different skills systematically and use them in other subjects.

The school continues to take good care of its pupils. All staff, including teaching assistants, midday supervisors and the administration and caretaking teams work very well together to support pupils' individual needs.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise the school's expectations of the pupils and take closer account of information from assessments in planning for their different needs – satisfactory.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum for English, mathematics and ICT – satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide the school with a clear driving force for improvement. She has ensured that complexities of the staffing difficulties have been addressed extremely well. The priority of ensuring that monitoring and evaluation has remained a crucial part of the school's self-evaluation, with a very clear focus on the analysis of pupils' progress. The headteacher ensures that the tracking of pupil data is refined and extended to target individuals more closely. The deputy headteacher is consolidating her role in the school very effectively, particularly in monitoring and evaluating new initiatives such as the guided reading sessions. The senior leadership team work well together and have clearly defined roles. This, together with the clarity of the school's systems, has had a very positive impact on the induction of new members of staff, who have responded enthusiastically. The school has produced a thorough science action plan in order to increase the progress of pupils in this subject in line with the better progress in

English and mathematics. The IEB continues to provide high quality support for the school. It has now been supplemented well by the shadow governing body. These governors are committed to their new roles and have already begun forging links with key members of staff within the school in order to develop their monitoring of the school's provision.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Monitor the implementation of planned improvements closely, and evaluate their impact on pupils' achievement – good.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in holding the school to account for the quality of education and standards attained by the pupils – good.

External support

The LA continues to support the school well, responding effectively to the school's changing needs. This has been particularly valuable in identifying personnel to supplement the difficulties in the school's staffing situation. The school improvement partner continues to support senior leaders very effectively in managing change. The LA governor support unit and the subject consultants continue to provide good quality guidance and professional development for staff and governors. This is extending the staff's subject knowledge and supporting governors in understanding the responsibilities of their new roles. The National Leader in Education is an important source of additional expertise, particularly in supporting the headteacher in handling the staffing challenges. The external support for the newly qualified teacher is working very well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Extend the successful strategies for challenging more able pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 6 to the other classes.
- Implement the science action plan.