

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

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7 February 2009

Mrs Jackie Chevaugeon  
Acting Headteacher  
Blyth Horton Grange First School  
Kitty Brewster  
Blyth  
Northumberland  
NE24 4RE

Dear Mrs Chevaugeon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blyth Horton Grange First School

Following my visit to your school on 4 and 5 February 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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 – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State the chair of governors and the Director of Child Services for Northumberland LA.

Yours sincerely

Christine Graham  
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Blyth Horton Grange First School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 4-5 February 2009

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including 12 part lessons. Documents were scrutinised and meetings held with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives from the interim executive board (IEB), the school improvement partner (SIP), staff and representatives from the local authority (LA).

## Context

Since the last visit there have been a number of staffing changes. The executive headteacher and the associate assistant headteacher have returned to their own school and the 'soft federation' with Malvins Close First School is at an end. The school's link inspector is now acting headteacher; this arrangement will last until the end of the summer term. The senior team is smaller than was previously the case and now consists of the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. The roles and responsibilities of the senior team have been restructured. Three teachers have left the school and the long-term absence of two teachers continues. Two vacancies are covered by temporary or supply staff and the previously non-class based SENCO is covering the other class. A new SIP has been appointed. Arrangements to appoint a substantive headteacher are under way; the appointment is expected to be made before half-term.

## Achievement and standards

Evidence from the inspection confirms the school's view that pupils are not yet achieving well enough and that the attainment of a high proportion of pupils is below that expected for their age and ability. The school's own analysis of pupils' work indicates that assessment data used to inform the tracking of pupil progress were too generous. However, effective action has been taken to improve matters. Teachers have received training and support which is helping them to assess pupils' work accurately and gain a secure view of national benchmarks. Assessments of pupils' work are being moderated and the school is beginning to develop a secure view of pupils' attainment. This is helping the school to track pupils' progress rigorously and to hold teachers to account should matters not improve. Test and assessment data are used to group pupils. Although this helps teachers to provide work for different ability groups, the match of work to ability is not yet secure. This is particularly the case in mathematics where the work provided for many pupils is not challenging enough. Systems used for assessment and target setting have been simplified and the targets set for individual pupils are realistic and based securely on their most pressing needs. In some classes pupils are beginning to assess their learning and provide feedback to the teacher. They are happy to use the simple but effective system which has been adopted and make sensible judgements. However,

teachers are not using the valuable information gained from this activity to adapt planning in order to provide further support or challenge for pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in English and mathematics – satisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

Attendance continues to improve. Attendance in the autumn term was significantly better than in the same term the previous year but remains well below average. The attendance of children in the EYFS and Year 1 is much less regular than in some other classes. Attitudes in lessons are good and pupils are more positive about learning although not all are willing to answer questions or participate in discussion. Behaviour is at least satisfactory and often good. Pupils are encouraged to make sensible choices and manage their own behaviour.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Establish a uniform system to improve the behaviour of pupils – good

### Quality of provision

The school is taking effective action to stabilise staffing and allay the concerns of parents, however, situations outside of the school's control continue to cause difficulties in some year groups. Where possible, existing staff are being reallocated in order to provide the least disruption possible for pupils. Where this is not possible temporary or supply staff are given effective induction and support.

School self-evaluation provided before the visit judged teaching as broadly satisfactory but made clear that some inadequacies remain. Inspection evidence confirms this. The acting headteacher is aware that satisfactory teaching is not good enough to overcome pupils' significant legacy of underachievement and robust action has been taken to improve teaching and learning in all key stages. All staff have been made aware of their responsibilities as teachers and there is a good range of staff training and development. Some training is designed to improve the skills of all staff and other training and support is matched securely to individual need. The acting headteacher has high expectations and these have been made clear to staff. There are regular and rigorous lesson observations and staff receive very helpful feedback which identifies both strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are given targets and timescales for improvement and receive support in order to ensure that these targets are met. Planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) has been reviewed so that year group teams are able to plan together. The school uses LA consultancy time wisely and to good effect.

Some positive outcomes can already be seen. Pupils have more opportunities to talk about their work and to work with a partner or small group. They take pride in their

work and their handwriting and presentation are much improved. Some pupils are beginning to think about what they have learned and where they might need further support, however, there is still some way to go. These improvements are not consistent across the school and teachers do not implement new systems effectively. Lessons do not proceed at a swift enough pace and some teachers are very easily distracted and frequently lose the focus of the lesson. There appears to be little sense of urgency and teachers are not yet making every minute count in the drive to raise standards. The subject knowledge of some staff is weak and year group teams share planning but do not always share resources or methods of delivery.

The acting headteacher and LA are using the building work planned for the summer term to enhance provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Classrooms will be relocated in order to provide easy access to the outdoor area. This will provide additional opportunities for child-initiated learning, which is currently a focus of development, and will help EYFS teachers to work closely with their colleagues in Key Stage 1.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Inadequacies identified during the last visit have been corrected and the curriculum is now appropriately balanced. However, although the school makes good use of the time available there is too little time available in Key Stage 2 to allow each subject its full time allocation. The acting headteacher and IEB are consulting parents about plans to extend the school day.

The provision made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving. Better use is made of assessment information in order to plan work which builds on existing knowledge and skills and more effective use is made of higher level teaching assistants and teaching assistants to support pupils in lessons. Teaching assistants have been assigned to year group teams and the management of their activities is becoming more effective. However, a very high proportion of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Given the legacy of underachievement in the school it is possible that some difficulties may simply be the result of inadequacies in teaching and learning. The acting headteacher has identified that systems to provide and manage interventions are complex and that the impact of some interventions is limited. In the short-term extra administrative support has been provided to help manage this but in the longer-term the school feels that a major review is needed. This is planned to take place later in the spring term.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum, in particular to encourage more involvement of pupils in their learning – satisfactory
- Make better provision to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The leadership of the acting head teacher is good. She has taken prompt and effective action to eradicate inadequacies and improve the most important areas of the school's work. School self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and regular and the accurate analysis of the evidence collected has provided a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Plans made to improve the school have short time-scales and identify clearly the most immediate priorities. The actions needed to bring about improvement are clear and outcomes and early impact are evaluated and reviewed in order to plan next steps. The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders have been restructured and the acting headteacher has rightly ensured that improving their teaching skills is prioritised. However, despite the fact that senior and middle leaders are willing and want the school to improve, they lack the experience and skills needed to carry out their roles effectively. Despite the good progress which has been made much remains to be done and at present too much responsibility for improvement lies with the acting headteacher.

The IEB has been restructured and is now very effective. Board members have considerable experience of school improvement and are using this to good effect to support the school and ensure it tackles weaknesses with sufficient urgency. IEB meetings are regular and purposeful and result in short term action plans which clearly identify individual responsibilities. Timescales for the completion of actions are short and this has increase the pace of improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the leadership and management of the school at all levels – satisfactory

External support

The LA acted decisively to stabilise the school and this has proved to be very effective. The acting head teacher, IEB and SIP are working very well with the LA and their combined efforts are having a very positive impact. The LA continues to provide a great deal of support for the school and this is well targeted towards the most important priorities. Opportunities provided by the planned refurbishment planned for the summer term are being used to further improve the provision made for pupils and planned changes are being facilitated very effectively by other council services. The school improvement partner (SIP) is very effective. She is using her skills and expertise to good effect in order to accelerate the school's progress.

Priorities for further improvement

- Stabilise staffing
- Improve the quality of learning
- Ensure all school leaders have the capacity to improve the school further

