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Mrs Elaine Hibbert
Headteacher
Hollin Primary School
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Manchester
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Dear Mrs Hibbert

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hollin Primary School

Following my visit with Lyn Field, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2 and 3 December 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2008. 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

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the interim executive board and the Executive Director, Children Schools and Families for Rochdale.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Hollin Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 14 lessons, two assemblies and a registration; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, staff, the headteacher of the collocated special school, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), representatives of the local authority (LA) and, informally, with a number of parents.

Context

Following a term of interim leadership, a new substantive headteacher took up post at the beginning of this term. In addition, three new permanent teachers joined the school, as did two teachers with contracts for this academic year.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Standards reached in the 2009 Key Stage 2 national tests were well below average overall and in English and mathematics. While performance in mathematics remained broadly similar to that in 2008, there was a decline in standards in English. The school did not reach the government's floor target in either subject. However, standards in science rose to below average following a sustained trend of well below average attainment. Overall, pupils' achievement was inadequate despite improvements in the progress made in both mathematics and science. Achievement in English dropped for the second year running and was significantly lower than average for the outgoing Year 6.

The current picture is more promising. The school's own assessments for all pupils in the core subjects show that, in the first half of this term, rates of progress accelerated to above average. Although these were uneven across the year groups and subjects, data indicate that the majority of pupils made at least one sub-level of progress in reading and mathematics. In writing, at least a third of pupils made a minimum of one sub-level of progress. A number of factors are contributing to these rises, most significantly, an improvement in pupils' learning. Pupils' increased engagement and eagerness in lessons, along with their good behaviour, are contributing well to their improved rates of progress. These are being fostered effectively through activities such as the enterprise week, during which the inspection took place. Exciting projects, contributing to a whole-school event, thoroughly enthused pupils, generating good teamwork and lively debate. Importantly, the practical context rooted cross-curricular learning in life beyond school. Other factors include the reshaping of the Key Stage 1 literacy curriculum to better meet pupils' needs; sharper targeting of support for pupils; and an increase in



the amount of teaching time, including the introduction of 'early work' which sets a good tone for the day's learning.

Since the last monitoring inspection, the organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage unit has improved. Assessment information is carefully analysed to decide where teaching should focus. Activities are attractive, imaginative and capture children's interest, especially in the way in which the outdoor area extends and enriches what children learn indoors. Children respond positively and move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas. They make independent decisions to follow up ideas from directed sessions and take advantage of the many opportunities to practise their writing skills. Observations are used increasingly well to build a picture of each child's learning and make appropriate adjustments to planning. Sessions led by adults are accurately pitched but, in children's own play, opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge them to take their ideas further.

The staff as a whole are taking greater responsibility for the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning. New systems have been established to identify pupils who find learning hard: a clear distinction is now made between those with special learning needs and those who are underachieving. As a consequence, a far more rigorous approach to planning is developing, although the use of assessment in the course of teaching is at too early a stage to benefit pupils of all abilities. However, staff are expected to give a clear rationale for providing targeted support for pupils who are capable of making faster progress. In turn, the impact of interventions is being monitored closely. Good liaison with the collocated special school is providing staff with useful ideas to help pupils with specific learning difficulties to gain more from lessons.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and accelerate achievement in mathematics, writing and science at Key Stage 2 – satisfactory
- do more to boost the achievement of pupils who find learning hard, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

There has been a marked improvement in the overall rate of attendance which is above average to date this term. There has been a significant reduction in the number of persistent absentees compared with the same period last year. The high profile given to raising attendance is paying dividends. The headteacher personally makes direct contact with families, as well as working closely with the educational welfare officer, where attendance is problematic. In addition, successes are being recognised through, for instance, individual letters to parents or carers of pupils with 100% attendance. The new daily breakfast club attracts about 10% of pupils and is having a positive impact on attendance and readiness for learning.



The headteacher is keen to involve parents more in school life. To this end, a questionnaire was circulated seeking parents' views. The rate of return was high and responses were overwhelmingly positive. Parents who responded think their child is happy at school. Parents are increasingly involved in their children's learning. Their contributions to reading diaries and Key Stage 1 'early work' sessions at the beginning of the day help them have a much clearer idea of what is expected of pupils. Responses to a questionnaire completed by pupils were also extremely positive and their increased enjoyment is evident in improved attendance.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- persist with developing strategies to raise attendance - good

The effectiveness of provision

There has been a marked improvement in the quality of lessons since the last visit. The majority observed were good because strategies for effective teaching are beginning to be embedded as both teachers and teaching assistants implement new ideas. Their enthusiasm, teamwork and willingness to reflect on their own skills, communicates itself to their pupils. They, in turn, are keen to do better and collaborate well in lessons.

Regular tracking of pupils' progress means teachers are taking more account of the different stages pupils have reached when they plan activities. Lessons are generally well structured to help pupils take small steps in learning so a good pace is maintained. In lessons, both teachers and teaching assistants keep a close watch on how pupils respond to questions and problem solving tasks. Although there is room for further development, they are becoming increasingly skilled in giving prompt help to individuals or in adjusting the lesson plan to recap on areas pupils find difficult.

Classroom environments are rich in their support for pupils' progress towards literacy and numeracy targets. On several occasions pupils were seen to refer to displays to remind themselves of key vocabulary. The staff are now jointly monitoring the displays to ensure there is progression from room to room and that due recognition is given to other subjects. They have also identified inconsistencies in the way in which work is marked and plan to refine the current systems.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- use assessment information more effectively, particularly at Key Stage 2, to plan work that meets pupils' individual needs and enables pupils to make good progress – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher is providing authoritative, well-judged and experienced direction to the school. As a consequence, she has rapidly gained the commitment of



staff to bring about improvement and morale is high. The headteacher's high expectations are clear and her high visibility around the school, including serving at the breakfast club, is boosting the confidence of all stakeholders. No time has been wasted in establishing essential whole-school systems to enable strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress and the quality of provision to be identified and acted upon. Teachers are working collaboratively to develop fully the skills needed to assess and track pupils' progress accurately. Through regular meetings, they are being held accountable for the progress of their class. Frequent monitoring of lessons is providing an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. On this firm basis targeted training, individual support and coaching have been put in place. The work of teaching assistants has been evaluated and training provided on, for example, the delivery of intervention programmes.

The headteacher has begun to develop leadership at all levels. Senior team roles have been clarified and some support for the development of these put in place. However, increased teaching commitments are currently hampering full implementation at this level. Curriculum teams have been introduced to lead on areas of learning. These are empowering teachers by providing opportunities both to take a collaborative lead and to develop monitoring and evaluation skills through, for instance, joint learning walks.

A broad range of links with the collocated special school have grown apace, fostering an inclusive environment. Increasingly staff are working together, with evident benefits from the expertise in matching provision to the special educational needs and/or disabilities of pupils. Shared activities include integrated learning sessions, assemblies and extra-curricular activities such as circus skills. The enterprise week is a joint venture which is contributing well to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

The IEB continues to provide a high level of challenge to the school, not only on standards and progress, but also with regard to safeguarding and the budget. The headteacher's detailed reports keep members well informed. These are complemented by regular visits to the school by the chair for a range of meetings and events.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop robust systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work in order to better inform self-evaluation and development planning— good

External support

The school continues to access good quality support matched to specific development needs from the LA, although it has not been possible to appoint an embedded teaching and learning consultant. The work of consultants in literacy, numeracy and the Early Years Foundation Stage is valued by the school. Staff are benefiting from courses and coaching funded by the Greater Manchester Challenge

