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Mrs Horsley
Farnworth CofE Controlled Primary School
Pit Lane
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Cheshire
WA8 9HS

Dear Mrs Horsley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Farnworth CofE Controlled Primary School

Following my visit with Henry Moreton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 08 – 09 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Halton.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Farnworth CofE Controlled Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 08 - 09 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited 17 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, the vicar, representatives from the local authority and the Interim Executive Board.

Context

Significant changes to governance and staffing have occurred following the inspection in June 2009. The governing body was replaced on 1st October 2009 by an Interim Executive Board. The headteacher remains absent from school. His post is currently filled by the deputy headteacher, who was appointed to the position of acting headteacher on the 1st October. An assistant headteacher has stepped up to cover the post of deputyhead teacher. Two teachers retired in July and one teacher has relocated. These posts are filled by two permanent and one temporary teacher. One teacher is absent on long term sick leave. This class is covered by temporary teachers; there have been six to date, and sometimes by a higher level teaching assistant. Two teaching assistants are absent on long term sick leave and their positions are covered by temporary agency staff.

In September, most staff changed year groups. One teacher changed year group at October half term. In addition, many staff took on different and/or additional subject responsibilities.

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

In 2009, the standards attained by 11 year olds in the national assessment tests were average and lower than previously. Standards are in steady decline. Fewer pupils reach the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science than is found nationally. Many pupils make inadequate progress from their average to above average starting points. The standards reached by seven-year-olds were above the national average in reading and mathematics, but below the national average in writing. Again, this represents inadequate progress for many pupils who started school with levels at or above those typical of four and five-year-olds nationally.

Currently, the school does not have a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing or whether there is improvement since the inspection in June. A new system for collating pupils' progress data has been introduced, but it is not used to



evaluate pupils' progress effectively. In addition, some of the data in the system is based on inaccurate assessments of pupils' levels. The work in pupils' exercise books and the observation of lessons demonstrates that pupils are not making sufficient progress. There is a wide variation in the quality and quantity of work produced by pupils in parallel classes, particularly in Year 1 and Year 6. Frequently, work is not matched well to pupils' abilities. In the minority of classes where teaching is good, satisfactory progress is being made towards pupils assessing their own work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented continue to make unsatisfactory progress. Some highly articulate pupils say their work is 'dull and far too easy'. Overall, pupils' progress remains inadequate.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that pupils in Key Stage 2 make much better progress and attain higher standards, especially in mathematics and writing by:
 - involving them much more in their own learning and assessment
 - using the information gained from tracking their progress far more effectively in order to provide pupils with work which is responsive to their needs and provides a suitable level of challenge – inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour remains good. They cooperate well with each other. However, pupils continue to become de-motivated when bored, and this shows itself in low level unruliness, even in Year 1. Most pupils say they feel safe in school. However, many pupils expressed disquiet, in particular over the sudden postponement of the Christmas disco. There are very few opportunities for pupils to contribute generally to the community or around school and this aspect is now inadequate. For example, there are few opportunities for pupils of all ages to participate in sport or other physical activities. Clubs pupils enjoyed, such as German and Art Club no longer run. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Inspectors observed a range of teaching across the curriculum. The majority of lessons observed were of a satisfactory quality, a quarter were inadequate and a similar proportion, good. Some improvements to teaching and learning have been made. For example, inspectors saw fewer lessons which relied on worksheets and in most classrooms display is linked to what pupils' are expected to learn. In addition, relationships between staff and pupils are mainly good. Where teaching was good, high expectations exist and the pupils take pride in their work. Teachers ensure pupils understand the task by using assessment tools, such as traffic lights and there is also evidence of some good marking. The pace in lessons is appropriate and pupils are confident learners.



Where teaching was satisfactory or weaker, pupils spend too much time on the carpet, inactive. Sometimes teacher's explanations were confusing and pupils did not understand what they had to achieve. Work was not well matched to pupils' abilities and lacked challenge. On occasion, tasks were far too challenging, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in a history lesson, some pupils told the inspector that they could not read the worksheet provided to learn about the view point of Boudicca and her allies. In some lessons, pupils completed all of their work on white boards, wiping it off before the teacher had the opportunity to assess how well they achieved the task.

There has been some progress in writing a long-term and medium-term curricular plan, but it is unfinished and unwieldy. There is no robust whole-school curricular plan to address progress and key skills. The more detailed planning for mathematics and literacy is inconsistent across the school and within the parallel year classes. It does not always indicate what pupils of different ability are expected to achieve. Work is commencing on revising the weekly planning for mathematics and English, in part to alleviate staff workload and raise morale. This is too little, too late. The curriculum still fails to motivate pupils. There are too few opportunities to explore and experience a rich and varied curriculum. Pupils report that they enjoy visits and the activities resulting from them, but some pupils find the basic diet of English and mathematics dull. There are very few opportunities for pupils to participate in sport, music or artistic experiences. Few clubs exist and those which do are not available to all pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 by:
 - providing pupils with consistently challenging work
 - increasing the pace of lessons and setting much higher expectations for the amount and quality of work to be completed in lessons – inadequate

- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - producing a whole-school curricular plan that identifies how pupils will progressively acquire and apply key skills across different subjects
 - ensuring that planning fully matches pupils' needs making it much more relevant and exciting for pupils – inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders and managers demonstrate an awareness of the need to improve pupils' achievement and standards. However, the senior leadership team are uncertain how to do this and consequently, progress is far too slow. Senior leaders have stepped up courageously to their new roles, but are ill-prepared to carry them out confidently. Their actions are sometimes ill-conceived and poorly communicated. The advice, guidance and support received from consultants is seriously weakened



by a lack of coherent monitoring and evaluation at all levels of leadership. Consequently, the capacity within the school to improve remains inadequate.

Staff morale is very low, including for those holding posts of responsibility. Changes made to teachers' year groups and responsibilities in September have resulted in some previously good departments being weakened. Many staff are not clear about how to improve their practice and shared concerns with inspectors. For some staff, in particular those who are new to the school, protocols for reading, handwriting and general classroom management are not clear. Teachers are aware of their accountability for the standards pupils achieve, but they are looking for support, clear direction and guidance in how to ensure pupils achieve their potential.

Safeguarding and community cohesion remains insecure. Training has been provided recently but this has not been disseminated to all staff. Actions which are agreed at a senior level are not carried out by all staff. As a result, the health, welfare and safety of pupils remain a concern.

The new Interim Executive Board knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are securing relevant information on a regular basis from the acting headteacher, but have not ensured that sufficiently robust systems exist to check its accuracy. Consequently, they have not acted with the urgency that is required to remedy some of the more serious weaknesses. Parents and pupils are frustrated by the failure of leadership to secure improvement, particularly with regard to the disruption in staffing, which is resulting in inequality of opportunity for pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement.

Improve the quality of leadership and management by:

- making leaders and managers at all levels more accountable and responsible for the progress made by pupils and the standards they achieve
- including all staff more in school development planning, the analysis of assessment data and in checking on the effectiveness of provision
- ensuring that statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding and community cohesion are fully met
- enabling governors to acquire the necessary information and skills that will allow them to support and challenge the school's performance effectively - inadequate

External support

The local authority has provided a satisfactory support to the school in line with its statement of action. Consultants and local authority officers have visited the school on a regular basis and personnel advice and additional financial support have been secured. In addition, the local authority formed the Interim Executive Board to



replace the governing body and a consultant headteacher has provided bespoke support to the acting headteacher. However, because the management of the school is not robust enough to carry through the advice and guidance provided with sufficient rigour, and the monitoring by the local authority is not incisive, the support has had a very limited impact.

Priorities for further improvement

- To eradicate inadequate teaching and improve the quality of teaching across the whole school.

