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Mr Nigel Greathead
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Greathead

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Manor Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 March 2010, 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 second 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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 Chair of Governors and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Manor Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 March 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, including eight lesson observations and a visit to the Early Years Foundation Stage to observe provision; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, other members of staff, the School Improvement Partner, the local authority officer, three governors and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the monitoring visit in November 2009 there have been some changes to the staffing structure. A member of staff has been appointed to the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), two teachers are currently on sick leave and supply teachers are taking their classes.

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

Information collected by the school on pupils' progress shows that pupils make uneven progress as they move through the school. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection show a similar picture. The amount of progress pupils make is directly linked to the quality of teaching they receive. Progress for pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 is accelerating due to the stronger teaching they now receive. In these classes, pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, attainment in writing is starting to rise. Despite this, the school is aware that Year 6 attainment in English and mathematics remains below target. This reflects the legacy of these pupils' slow progress during previous years, especially the progress of potentially higher-attaining pupils. Nevertheless, a marked shift for the better in the school's efforts to make up lost ground is emerging. There is now a clear understanding of how high attainment needs to be in order for the school to claim that learning is effective. The inspector saw evidence of improved progress in key areas of learning such as reading. Improvements of this nature reflect the introduction of more robust approaches to the use of assessment to drive up expectations and outcomes. Class teachers throughout the school are starting to closely track the progress their pupils are making in relation to their targets. Consequently, since the last visit, the school has been developing the assessment procedures that are laying the foundations for improved learning. There is still more to do. Progress is not consistently better for all pupils in all classes. The second of a comprehensive termly assessment of progress has just taken place and school leaders can now start to track the progress all



groups of pupils are making. Teachers are developing a more precise understanding of how to assess pupils' progress and have identified where progress is slower for some pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, throughout the school, particularly in writing – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Although there is some improvement in the quality of teaching, it is still patchy and the absence of two teachers reduces the effectiveness of learning across the school. Local authority officers have continued to work with individual and groups of teachers and teaching assistants. Staff have been very appreciative of this support and guidance. Professional development activities have included 'talk for write' which has improved skills necessary to support pupils as writers. As a result, attainment in writing is starting to improve. Similarly, guidance in using mental mathematics strategies and the emphasis on using correct mathematical vocabulary are supporting improved progress in this subject in Year 6. Thorough planning continues to be used to plan lessons which highlight the learning needs of groups of pupils across the ability range. Some plans are starting to identify the learning pupils will gain rather than describing the activity the pupils will do. As a result, the planned activity becomes a reality and is leading to each group of pupils receiving learning opportunities which more securely match their needs. However, there is still scope for more-able pupils to be challenged to ensure that they reach the levels of which they are capable. Pupils' progress meetings are held each term between each class teacher and headteacher which leads to a more effective use of the rigorous system now used by the school to check on pupils' progress.

Key aspects of teaching have improved since the last visit. Practical, fun activities are more the norm and pupils appreciate this improvement. More pupils are working independently and taking responsibility for their learning, and there is an increase in the use of effective questioning techniques to explore pupils' understanding. For example, during a mathematics focus session in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teacher asked one child the reason for giving an incorrect answer to a number problem. In so doing, valuable skills for further learning, such as confidence to have a go and thinking more deeply, were being developed. There is scope to develop staff questioning techniques even further to probe pupils' thinking more precisely. Teaching assistants contribute more effectively to pupils' learning. They more routinely check on pupils' progress in lessons, as well as taking groups and individual pupils for intervention work. In some instances, the skills of the teaching assistants are drawn on in sharing with the class what the group and individuals have achieved or to work with more-able pupils, but this is not characteristically so. Teachers have responded to support from local authority officers and use effective strategies for tackling low level disruption and use prompts to ensure that learning is maintained. The time teachers spend talking to pupils prior to setting the task has decreased although this is inconsistent across the school. Evidence shows that pupils are



expected to use their writing skills in other subjects, for example, to record investigations in science in Year 4. However, in some instances chances for pupils to write are being missed as teachers use photocopied sheets for pupils to complete a task. Through the recent work of the SENCO, there is an awareness of the need to more precisely match provision to support the learning of individual pupils with special educational needs more precisely.

Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its policy on marking and, although it is early days, inspection evidence showed that the policy is being used consistently throughout the school. The method of using pink to highlight what pupils have achieved and green to identify how pupils need to improve their work is understood by pupils. The practice of peer-marking is starting to grow and this supports pupils in their learning as they identify the strengths and 'next steps' in work of their classmates. Pupils know what they are expected to learn as almost all teachers now make this plain at the start of the lesson. The 'steps for success' are now clearer and pupils can refer to them during the lesson. Staff have received training in assessing pupils' progress from the local authority consultants and these skills are stronger than at the last visit. As a result, they have recognised that the system for marking pupils' work and setting targets for improvement needs to be refined in order to ensure accelerated progress for all pupils. The addition of a display of pupils' writing is a timely one to support the assessment systems, as it shows pupils and staff what is needed to achieve National Curriculum levels from 2C through to 4B.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make at least satisfactory progress and continually build on their prior knowledge – satisfactory.
- improve the quality of academic guidance so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to produce better work – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last visit, senior leaders and governors have continued to engage with the local authority in their determination to raise achievement for all groups of pupils. The Chair of the Governing Body meets regularly with the headteacher. Leaders are building on the foundation established at the time of the last visit and have made the focus on the quality of teaching and learning a priority. With the support of the local authority the school has recruited governors to fill the vacancies that existed at the time of the inspection. Governors have attended training in the use of published assessment information in order to enable them to evaluate the achievement of pupils at Manor compared with that of pupils nationally. Training in self-evaluation of the school and in completing the self-evaluation form is planned for later this term. New governors have brought valuable expertise to the school; subject governors have been appointed and meetings between the subject leaders and the allocated governor have taken place. Governing Body meeting minutes show that governors are holding the school leadership more to account for pupils' progress. Governors



will receive the second set of analysis of progress of pupils in March and are eager to use this information to start to plot progress over time. Parent governors have received training in the role of 'critical friend' to the school and in monitoring the effectiveness of the quality of provision. They have been instrumental in canvassing the views of parents and acting upon their comments. As a result, meetings to discuss the school's approach to discipline and to the teaching of writing have been well attended by parents. The school is aware of the need for Early Years Foundation Stage assessment to be completed in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses in children's progress, and to inform planning more effectively to ensure that learning and progress is continuous throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1.

Due to staff absence the planned extension of the development of the subject leader role to other staff has been postponed. However, two subject leaders have continued to develop in their role. The SENCO has worked closely with officers from the local authority to establish clear areas for improvement and to develop partnerships with external agencies, for example, the educational psychologist. Both the SENCO and the leader for mathematics have attended leadership training provided by the local authority. Through this they have increased in confidence and developed vital skills in the process of monitoring and evaluation. Reports to governors have contained information about the progress each leader is making. For example, the mathematics leader, through using the information collected on pupils' progress, has a better picture of whole-school achievement in that subject. Likewise, the SENCO has identified the need to use 'provision-mapping' to meet the needs of vulnerable groups of pupils better and the need to monitor the effectiveness on pupils' progress of intervention programmes. Despite these improvements, the absence of leaders for other subjects reduces the overall effectiveness of middle leaders.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness and knowledge of governors and subject leaders so that they are able to evaluate accurately the quality of the school's provision and take steps to raise standards and achievement – satisfactory.

External support

The school continues to benefit from the guidance and support of local authority advisers and consultants. The priority of evaluating the impact of staff development on classroom practice, through direct observations and working alongside teachers and pupils, is having a positive affect on teaching and achievement. Similarly, the local authority challenges leaders of the school through the termly meetings held with senior officers of the authority.



Priorities for further improvement

The school should continue its work on the priorities identified in the June 2009 inspection.