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Mr B Cregeen
Farnworth CofE Controlled Primary School
Pit Lane
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 9HS

Dear Mr Cregeen

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Farnworth CofE Controlled Primary School

Following my visit with Peter Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 February 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 the last monitoring visit – 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 February 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed 13 teachers, visited 17 parts of lessons, carried out a curriculum learning walk, scrutinised documents and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, parents, the vicar, the executive headteacher of Wade Deacon High School and the Interim Executive Board.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the local authority and the Interim Executive Board have secured leadership support for Farnworth through establishing a partnership with Wade Deacon High School. The executive headteacher of Wade Deacon is providing advice as a National Leader of Education and the school has the full-time on-site support of an associate headteacher. The substantive headteacher remains absent from school. The acting headteacher has resumed her role as deputy headteacher. One teacher has relinquished a leadership post. One teacher has been seconded temporarily to the senior leadership team. Two teachers have left the school and two teachers have joined the staff.

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

Standards remain broadly as reported at the time of the last monitoring visit in December 2009. However, the school now has a clear picture of how well all pupils are attaining. A robust tracking system has been introduced which is being used well by the associate headteacher to ascertain the potential of individual pupils and to set challenging targets. The associate headteacher is aware that current pupil assessment information is likely to contain some inaccuracies because teachers' skills in levelling pupils work are weak. The leadership is tackling this well. The associate headteacher knows which pupils in Year 6 are likely to attain national standards in May and those who are not on track to achieve their potential. These pupils are now receiving additional support on a daily basis. Class sizes for mathematics and English in Year 6 are smaller and pupils are working at levels more appropriate to their individual needs.

The work in pupils' exercise books and the observation of lessons demonstrates that pupils are beginning to make better progress, particularly in Key Stage 2. There is



still a wide variation in the quality and quantity of work produced by pupils in different year groups across the school, but the introduction of new, well-presented exercise books is leading to greater consistency, particularly where teaching is strong. In the minority of classes where teaching is good or better, good progress continues towards pupils assessing their own work. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable and links closely to the quality of teaching they receive in the classroom.

Progress since the last visit 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 – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour remains good. They appear keen to learn and are polite and friendly to visitors. Most pupils say they feel safe in school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were far more positive about their school than at the time of the previous monitoring visit. They say they like the new headteacher and are clear about his high expectations. There remain too few opportunities for pupils to contribute generally to the community or around school. Pupils report that they would like more diverse extra curricular provision. The additional mathematics and English after-school booster sessions for Year 6 were popular and pupils appreciate the new links with Wade Deacon High.

The effectiveness of provision

Inspectors observed teaching across the school. All the lessons observed in Key Stage 2 were satisfactory or better and one lesson was outstanding. The proportion of good teaching in Key Stage 2 has increased since the last monitoring visit. The proportion of inadequate lessons in the lower part of the school remains the same. However, there is good improvement in the quality of teaching in some classes in Key Stage 1 which were previously unsatisfactory.

The pupils report that lessons are more interesting because they have more practical activities. This was evident during the visit. Many of the mathematics lessons observed involved practical and problem-solving tasks which the pupils enjoyed. In the good or better lessons, the rate of learning is appropriate. Pupils understand their work and know how to improve it because they receive clear guidance from the teacher. In these lessons, teachers provide clear incremental steps for pupils of



lower ability and high challenge for the more able. Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning in these lessons informs the next day's activities well.

Where teaching was weak, teachers do not take full account of what pupils know and understand. Frequently, they set tasks that are at the wrong level for the pupils, in particular, for those of higher or lower ability. For example, in a Key Stage 1 literacy lesson, higher-ability pupils spent the main part of the lesson drawing a picture rather than starting a writing task. As a result, they produced very little work. Yet, in the same lesson, pupils of lower ability were trying to apply their very limited knowledge of adjectives to writing sentences, when they were barely able to form letters or spell simple words. Consequently, pupils failed to learn what the teacher intended. In the Early Years Foundation Stage teacher's expectations are too low. Planning is weak and assessment does not inform what children need to learn next. At the last monitoring visit, the school was required to eradicate inadequate teaching. It is making satisfactory progress.

Consistency in planning across year groups and classes, particularly in Key Stage 2, is now in place. Teachers report that weekly joint lesson-planning meetings are helping them to make better use of resources and are improving their understanding of assessment. However, an overall curriculum plan, which links progression in the key skills in reading, phonics, spelling, writing and mathematics to teacher's daily planning, is not yet in place, particularly in the lower part of the school.

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 – satisfactory
- 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 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last monitoring visit, the new leadership from Wade Deacon High School has quickly ascertained what needs doing and is driving through a well-conceived plan for improvement at a rapid pace. The actions taken so far have led to securing consistency in basic working practices, raising staff morale and good team work. All staff expressed their determination to improve and now recognise the need for change. However, some remaining significant weaknesses in leadership at all levels exist.

The associate headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the staff well and is providing a good level of support, which is improving the quality of teaching



overall. Activities such as; looking at pupils' work from outstanding primary schools, joint planning meetings and regular lesson observations providing clear areas for improvement are increasing staff confidence. Staff appreciate the clear direction from the associate headteacher and expressed their relief that support is now meeting their needs. Staff understand their accountability for pupils' standards and the new pupil progress tracking system. In the better lessons, staff are using this information effectively to inform learning and teaching.

A temporary secondment to the senior leadership team is increasing its capacity to improve the curriculum. This new team is realistic about the challenges ahead and is working closely with the associate headteacher. Parents who spoke to inspectors are supportive of the new headteacher and reported that there is a difference in the attitudes of the older children in particular.

Safeguarding now meets current statutory requirements. The leadership is taking appropriate action with regard to community cohesion.

The new Interim Executive Board has taken strong action in dealing with the findings from the previous monitoring visit. The associate headteacher is providing the board with a high-quality analysis of progress to date, which is enabling them to evaluate effectiveness and take appropriate action. They are supporting and challenging the leadership well. However, some leadership issues remain unresolved. The Interim Executive Board has the secure knowledge and capacity to tackle them.

Progress since the last visit 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 - good

External support

The local authority is providing good support to the school. Since the last monitoring visit it has secured the services of Wade Deacon High School and is providing additional financial support. The strong leadership advice from a National Leader for Education is having a positive impact overall.

Priorities remain the same as those identified at the time of the last inspection.

