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Mr Nigel Greathead
Headteacher
Manor Primary School
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Dear Mr Greathead

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Manor Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 July 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 third 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 third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, including five lesson observations, and conducted 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, three governors, a group of 11 parents and groups of pupils.

Context

The staffing structure remains similar to the time of the last monitoring visit in March 2010. Two teachers are on sick leave and supply teachers are taking their classes. A supply teacher takes the Year 4 pupils in the morning and in the afternoon the pupils from this class join either Year 3 or Year 5. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a job-share between two supply teachers, one taking the class from Monday to Thursday and the second taking the class on Friday. The teacher in Year 5 has resigned her post and will leave the school at the end of this academic year. The Year 4 supply teacher will also leave in July.

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

The school's most recent assessment information shows that attainment overall for pupils at the end of Year 2, although low, is near to the national average. Academic standards in reading are better than those in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics has increased since 2009. Numbers of pupils reaching Level 2A in writing have almost doubled on numbers in 2009. Pupils' progress has accelerated in all subjects. This is due to pupils receiving consistently better teaching and effective use of the system for checking pupils' progress to plan work which meets the needs of all pupils. Similarly, consistently better teaching in Year 6, which has successfully halted further underachievement, has resulted in pupils making significant progress over the year. Unvalidated test results, received by the school during the visit, show that attainment in English, mathematics and science remain low. However, the numbers reaching the higher Level 5 in English, especially in writing, have increased since 2009.

There are pockets of improved progress across the school but it is not a consistent picture. Pupils' work and observations of teaching during the inspection, and the school's information collected on pupils' progress, show that progress for pupils in other classes is irregular. As a result, although some pupils are moving forward in their learning, there is more to do for learning to move swiftly enough to raise

previous underachievement or to build on new learning. This is directly linked to the instability in staffing

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

The quality of teaching remains uneven across the school. The employment of supply teachers has created some stability. Local authority officers have continued to work with individual and groups of teachers to raise the quality of delivery. Staff have continued to receive support as they develop their skills in accurately assessing pupils' progress. In order to improve the accuracy of assessment in writing and mathematics, a training day was used for all staff to check colleagues' assessments of pupils' work. Consequently, teachers and teaching assistants have improved their skills and confidence in assessing pupils' work. Comprehensive planning is in place in all classes including the Early Years Foundation Stage. This planning outlines the learning of all groups of pupils and emphasises the questions which will be used to probe pupils' thinking. Although these questions are generally used effectively, in some instances there is insufficient regard to matching the question to the individual pupils' level. Pupil progress meetings continue to be an effective vehicle for checking on individual and groups of pupils' progress. Teachers conscientiously collect all the information needed on each pupil in readiness for the meetings with the headteacher. As a result, any underachievement is identified more quickly and support programmes are implemented to match individual pupils' needs and to accelerate progress. Although the process also identifies pupils who have made more than expected progress, there is an opportunity to use the system to set challenging targets for the more able pupils.

Key aspects of teaching, which had improved at the last monitoring visit, continue to be maintained. Activities are more practical and interesting for pupils. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher took the role of a character from a book to stimulate pupils. The interactive whiteboard is used well to improve teachers' delivery. After watching a video about the shortage of water in Africa, Year 5 were able to explain their feelings and produce persuasive writing to send to the local council to save money on signage, which they sent to Africa. The use of the interactive whiteboard has enabled teachers to vary their style especially at the start of lessons.

Since the last monitoring visit the school has reviewed the process for setting targets and providing academic guidance to pupils. The system is clearer, enabling pupils and teachers to use it more effectively. Pupils know they have curricular targets for reading, writing and mathematics. These targets are displayed on the classroom wall and in pupils' work-books. Pupils understand the links between the overarching target, their work, marking and next steps. Pupils use the 'must, should and could' statements to check their progress and the use of the 'I can' statement and 'steps to success' are greatly appreciated by pupils. The policy on marking, newly introduced

at the time of the last inspection, is being used consistently throughout the school. Staff confidently use the method of highlighting in pink the pupils' successes, while highlighting in green the aspects of work which need improving. As a result pupils know clearly what aspects of their work have improved, the progress they have made and what is needed to improve still further. However, it is still too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this system on pupils' achievement.

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 the effectiveness of the governing body has continued to grow. Governors bring a variety of expertise to the school and are rigorous in challenging senior leaders on teaching and learning, and the amount of progress pupils make. Meetings have taken place between the subject governor and the subject leader to discuss developments and identify further action. Each subject governor has provided the full governing body with a report of this meeting. As a result governors are more informed about all aspects of the school. Governors receive a wealth of information to enable them to monitor the effectiveness of their own decisions. The termly information evaluating pupils' progress is central to this process. As a result the governors are better informed about the achievement of pupils at Manor compared to national expectations. The Chair of the Governing Body meets regularly with the headteacher and, as a result, is able to monitor the day-to-day management of the school. Parent governors are playing an essential role in canvassing the views of parents and carers, and they circulate information. There is an opportunity for the school to keep parents more informed about the staffing situation. Since the last visit the school has completed the assessment on the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This assessment has been moderated by officers of the local authority. It provides a baseline from which the school and governors will be able to track the progress of individual and groups of children as they move through the school.

Steps to develop the roles of subject leaders have been thwarted by the instability in staffing. However, senior leaders have been proactive in finding a solution and have developed a team approach to the organisation and management of the curriculum. A curriculum plan is in place which outlines the subjects to be covered as pupils move through the school. Each year group has long- and medium-term plans which map out the links between subjects. There is a focus on incorporating writing in all areas. Three members of staff have trialled this approach, evaluated the effectiveness and led a staff training session in readiness for whole-school adoption

in September. Roles within the teams have been identified, action plans have been written, files have been established and an audit of resources has been completed. The school is now ready to implement this approach across the school and staff are aware of the need to assess its impact on the achievement of pupils.

The situation with staffing is the barrier to the school making more accelerated progress. The headteacher, governors and local authority have worked hard to minimise disruption on the achievement of pupils created by staff instability. The uncertainty of when teachers will return from absence makes it difficult for actions for improvement to be carried out. The improvement work of the school thus relies on a very small number of key staff. Governors are very aware that the progress of the school and improved achievement of the pupils is dependent on the quality of teaching and together with senior leaders and the local authority are working hard to resolve the issues.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

A variety of support has been used by the school through the work of consultants, advisory teachers and an advanced skills teacher. This support has covered English, mathematics and other key aspects of teaching. The Early Years Foundation Stage staff have benefitted from the support and guidance of the local authority Early Years Foundation Stage team. All support is having a positive affect on improving the overall effectiveness of the school. The authority remains committed in their endeavour to support and guide the school through the journey out of special measures. The termly meeting between the headteacher and senior officers of the local authority continues to support and challenge the school. These meetings, while challenging to the headteacher, have led the school to identify more sharply the developments that will have an impact on teaching, learning and the achievement of pupils and assess their work more closely against the success criteria.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that staffing provision is of a sufficient standard to be able to deliver improvements throughout the school.