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1 July 2010

Mr Nathan Price
St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School
Church Lane
Wolstanton
Newcastle
ST5 OEF

Dear Mr Price

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Michael Wainwright, additional inspector, to your school on 29 June 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 October 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – Inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 diocese of Birmingham, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Wulstan's Catholic Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on Tuesday 29 June 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at teaching in every class. Joint lesson observations were undertaken with members of the leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, executive and consultant headteachers, representatives of the governing body and from the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils and parents.

Context

There has been no significant change to staffing since the last monitoring visit. Over 15 pupils have left, particularly from Year 5. Staff who are currently on permanent supply will be leaving at the end of this term. Mr Price, the substantive headteacher will also be leaving to take up a post in another school. The headteacher from Our Lady and St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School has agreed to take on the role of executive headteacher on a collaborative basis for three days a week from September. The deputy headteacher will take on an acting headteacher role for the other two days. Sharon Kelly, headteacher from All Saints First School, who has been supporting the school, will continue to support the middle leadership team.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning
Lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work show that attainment is still average and pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to make satisfactory progress.

Learning seen in lessons ranged from good to inadequate. The majority of pupils recognise that more is being expected of them and feel that they are learning more successfully than they have in the past. This is not the case for the more able who are still not challenged sufficiently to enable them to achieve more demanding targets.

The school's own assessment data show that pupils have made satisfactory progress between March and June in literacy and numeracy, particularly those in Year 6. Although the school has successfully introduced individual pupil tracking system, the information available to all teachers is still not used effectively and consistently to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school has invested much time and additional teaching support for Year 6 pupils to compensate for some poor learning in previous years. These pupils have benefited from one-to-one tuition, booster sessions and targeted revision work particularly in English and mathematics. Their work shows accelerated progress, particularly in the use and application of mathematics. Many have also developed skills in crafting creative language to engage the reader and know well the conventions and formats of different types of

writing. Consequently, the school assessment data show that a majority of these pupils have made good progress from a low base. Inspectors' joint lesson observations with members of the leadership team however, show that some pupils in Years 2 to 5 continue to underperform due to a legacy of some poor teaching. Records and observations suggest that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the Nursery and Reception consistently make good progress, often from low starting points. This level of progress continues into Year 1. Children are settled particularly well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents and carers with children in these classes hold the quality of what is provided in high regard attributing it to the good leadership and the new purpose built accommodation which provides core services for children under 5 and their parents. Parents who spoke with the inspector said how pleased they were with the provision and how much their children enjoyed attending school.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school's own monitoring suggests that behaviour is much improved. Pupils are keen to learn and get on well with each other. Nevertheless, lesson observations and discussions with pupils indicate that behaviour management by some teachers remains inconsistent. On occasions, inspectors observed that some pupils' behaviour disrupted the learning of others, particularly when the attention of the teacher and teaching assistant was diverted from their planned work. It sometimes resulted from teachers dominating the lesson with lengthy introductions.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to vary considerably as it did at the time of the last inspection; some is good, but a significant minority of teaching remains inadequate. The impact of this variation is pupils' uneven progress, both from year to year as well as between those of different abilities. One of the strong features in most lessons continues to be the positive learning environment that teachers create, through, for example their use of praise. Teachers in Early Years Foundation Stage and particularly in Reception and Year 1 are now drawing upon a wider range of approaches and there is greater variety in, for example, how teachers use time, resources, organise group work and target questions. This is reflected in the consistently good progress children make by the time they move into Year 1.

Teachers are now planning their lessons well and start with sharing learning objectives with pupils, but they do not always check with pupils to see if they understand the work, instead they simply repeat it rather than explain it. There is too much variability in how well teachers monitor the progress of individuals and groups of pupils in lessons, particularly those who are working independently. On occasions, these pupils are not able to make the progress they should because the work they are given is either too hard or too easy.

Good use is continuing to be made of interactive whiteboards by most teachers to illustrate and enliven class discussions. At times there is an over-reliance on

technology by some teachers when what pupils say they need is more opportunity to be involved in practical activities rather than having to watch and listen to the teacher, sometimes for nearly half of the lesson. More and more teachers are now encouraging pupils to discuss with partners to help them to express their ideas and to work independently. Inspectors observed, and pupils reported, that the time given for discussion with partners is not always sufficient for them to develop their ideas. Similarly when pupils respond to questions raised by teachers they are not given sufficient time to discuss the question before the teacher continues with the lesson leaving some pupils feeling frustrated.

Since the last visit, the way that teaching assistants are deployed has been reviewed and reorganised. Their roles continue to be developed. Their involvement in lessons is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Marking is improving and is most effective when it is closely aligned to the specific focus of the lesson, whether it is literacy or numeracy. However, in some classes, marking is not routinely used to help pupils' learning or to help them consolidate previous learning. For example, teachers pose questions to pupils or ask them to complete a piece of work but do not follow this up, so pupils continue to repeat the same mistakes. Pupils are generally clear about the main learning intentions for individual lessons. They are less clear about what they need to do to improve their standards in writing, mathematics or reading.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching across the school – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

At the time of the last monitoring visit, safeguarding was judged to be satisfactory as some of the school's procedures did not fully meet government regulations. The school has responded well. All relevant policies and procedures are now in place and in line with requirements. Staff and governor awareness on this has been, and continues to be, raised through professional development activities. The school now keeps accurate up-to-date records of any incidents involving both staff and pupils. The number of recorded incidents of any form of bullying and incidents of poor behaviour is considerably reduced.

Although the senior leaders have introduced a systematic approach to monitoring the work it is doing, the success of some aspect of their work has been hampered by staffing issues. At the time of the last monitoring visit they were asked to eradicate inadequate teaching. They have not been able to achieve this. Similarly although the roles of middle leaders are beginning to be strengthened they are not yet able to hold staff to account for pupils' progress nor are they able to set a clear direction for improving their areas of responsibilities. They have not yet made any progress in

developing a plan which shows quantifiable and timed targets, so that progress towards them is measurable and can be reported accurately. Consequently, the school has not been able to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement across the school.

The leadership and management team has continued to respond well to external support, particularly for monitoring teaching and learning. The support given by staff from All Saints First School was noted as being particularly effective in Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1. As a result, teaching and learning in these classes is now consistently good. Most teachers are beginning to use the assessment data to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met. This practice is not consistent and the school recognises that teachers in Years 2 to Year 6 will require support to further refine the tracking of pupils' progress to determine the level of progress made by different groups so that it better informs the actions they need to take.

The school is still at a relatively early stage in its 'journey of improvement' and continues to require outside help. Members of the core group, especially set up after the last monitoring visit, recognise that there is still some considerable work to do, particularly in monitoring progress and holding staff to account. The group comprises of local authority staff, the headteacher and governors.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements – good progress
- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement – inadequate progress

External support

The school continues to value the support provided by the local authority. However, some of the support given to help the school to eliminate inadequate teaching has not been effective particularly for Years 2 to 6. The local authority recognises the need for continuing support by the school. It has therefore, given its commitment to intensify this support. An executive headteacher has been appointed to start in September. A consultant headteacher will work with him to continue with a programme of professional development for all staff with a particular focus on the middle leadership team.

Priorities for further improvement

- Address fully the priorities for improvement identified during the previous inspection and in the last monitoring visit.