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13 May 2010

Mrs Christine Lacey  
Headteacher  
Hallgate Primary School  
Hallgate  
Cottingham  
HU16 4DD

Dear Mrs Lacey

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hallgate Primary School

Following my visit with Joy law, HMI and Judy Jones, additional inspector to your school on 11 and 12 May 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

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 the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Hallgate Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 May 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including nine lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, pupils, governors and representatives of the local authority.

## Context

At the time of the visit three members of staff including the deputy headteacher, were on long-term leave as a result of ill-health. An assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school for the summer term. A School Intervention Grant has been used by the local authority to secure a partnership with an outstanding primary school nearby.

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

Pupils' attainment in the 2009 Key Stage 2 national tests was above average overall and in English and science. Standards in mathematics were broadly average. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2009, there was significant underachievement because pupils had made inadequate progress as they moved through Key Stage 1. Attainment in the end-of-year assessments was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Few pupils attained at the higher National Curriculum levels for pupils of this age. Similarly, many children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were working below the levels expected for their age group by the end of Reception. Literacy, numeracy and creative skills were especially low. This represented inadequate progress given their broadly typical skills and knowledge on entry.

Analysis and investigation of the 2009 and 2008 results undertaken after the last inspection identified that the school's assessment and tracking systems were unreliable. More often than not teacher assessments were found to be inaccurate. The version of the local authority's tracking software in place when the headteacher was appointed in April 2009 was found to be out-of-date. The current picture is more promising. Software has been updated and a reliable whole-school system to assess and track pupils' progress is in place. External validation shows teachers' assessments have improved and the vast majority are now accurate and secure.

The most recent school assessments show that rates of progress have improved since the last inspection. While there is some variation in progress across the year groups and in different classes, lesson observations confirm that almost all pupils are now making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress in most lessons. Data indicate that in Key Stage 1, more pupils are closer to making expected levels of

progress than in previous years. While attainment in all three core subjects is rising as a result and this is beginning to close the gap with national expectations, standards in writing remain too low especially in the current Year 1. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve the progress targets the school set, and attain standards in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science at the end of this academic year.

Pupil's writing is generally weak throughout the school. This creates a barrier to improving their learning and achievement in all subjects. The standard of work in pupil's books is disappointing. Too little attention is paid to presentation and setting out work. For instance, in a sample of mathematics books scrutinised by inspectors the layout of some calculations and problems was so cramped and untidy that it was impossible to make sense of them.

### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance is above average. Pupils' increasing engagement as active participants in their learning is resulting in better behaviour in the classroom. This is because their interest and enthusiasm are being captured and maintained more often. These factors are contributing well to the pupils' improving rates of progress and are being fostered effectively through the recent introduction of themed activities like the Viking project and 'mountain explorers'. Pupils are keen to work in teams and take on different roles through group tasks such as the design of a website. This is increasing their enjoyment of learning and helping to develop a broader range of basic skills that make a stronger contribution to their future economic well-being.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve the rate of pupils' progress – satisfactory.

### The effectiveness of provision

Staff and pupils are rising to the challenge of higher expectations. Improvements in the curriculum are playing a key role in engaging pupils more in their learning. All of the staff have embraced the changes proposed in the new curriculum for 2011 and have worked hard collectively to develop the school's implementation plan. Themed work that incorporates literacy and numeracy and sustains pupils' interest is developing well throughout the school.

The proportion of good or better lessons throughout the school is increasing steadily from a low base. Teachers now have a better understanding of what constitutes a good lesson, are responding positively to the clear direction the headteacher is providing and working hard to improve and reflect upon their practice. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to lessons and the care, guidance and support

provided for pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants are working more closely together to good effect, to implement new ideas, and monitor the progress pupils are making in order to tailor support and tackle any underachievement more effectively. Nonetheless, recent lesson observations have shown that the deployment of teaching assistants in lessons is not always as effective as it might be. The headteacher is aware that this is an area for future improvement.

Pupils know what their learning targets are for literacy and numeracy and are eager to reach them. Strategies for effective teaching such as setting and sharing clear learning objectives and success criteria with pupils are being used routinely. Strategies to assess pupils' progress during the course of a lesson in order to adapt activities to maximise the pace of learning are less well developed. Teachers generally have a clearer picture of the pupils' individual abilities, because whole-school assessment is now secure. This knowledge and understanding, however, is not yet being used consistently and effectively in lesson planning to adapt activities to cater for different needs and abilities. As a result, more able pupils in particular do not always receive appropriate levels of challenge. A recently introduced policy is helping to establish a common approach to marking and feedback. There is more work to do to implement this consistently throughout the school and ensure teachers' comments go beyond the congratulatory and help to move learning on. Nonetheless, pupils are clear about what the feedback symbols mean and they are increasingly being given time to act on any advice they are given.

With good support and direction from the local authority, the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly. The quality of provision is now satisfactory. Children are settled and happy and display good levels of confidence. Teaching assistants and nursery nurses are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and proactive and work very well with the teacher. Children are now given better learning and play opportunities. Assessments reflect a more accurate picture of children's ability and indicate that the vast majority of children are making appropriate progress given their individual starting points. Planning is informed by observation and review and takes greater account of children's needs and interests. Indoor and outdoor activities cater for all six areas of learning and development. The learning environment, both indoors and out, provides children with an appropriate range of interesting adult-led and child-initiated activities, which, coupled with the introduction of 'challenge cards' is extending children's skills and knowledge more effectively. The key worker system works well and good quality learning journals are regularly updated and maintained, providing parents with a clear record of their child's progress. The outdoor space is very well resourced, safe and inviting; although as yet, not all activities have clear learning intentions and this results in some overly boisterous play on occasions. The school recognises that there is more to do to refine assessment and transition arrangements and to further improve specific aspects of provision such as creative play and the level of challenge that activities provide for boys.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve outcomes and the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage– satisfactory.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Against a backdrop of insufficient leadership capacity partly as a result of the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher, the headteacher has made valiant efforts and taken determined steps to improve provision. She has focused on a manageable number of key priorities, produced appropriate plans and introduced the right strategies so far. Assessment and tracking systems have recently been overhauled but have yet to have an impact on planning in the classroom. Clear expectations and performance criteria have been established, for instance through the 'job cards' for staff and the 'Hallgate manifesto'. Leaders have been put in place for each key phase and are getting to grips with their roles. The coordination of numeracy, literacy, science and information and communication technology, has been reviewed so that there are clearer lines of accountability across the key stages. Nonetheless, while progress has been satisfactory overall, it has been slow. Many strategies have yet to have significant impact because there has not been sufficient leadership capacity to take forward all planned actions or to drive improvement through quickly enough.

Medium and long-term plans to secure sufficient leadership capacity so that recent improvements can be sustained and other important actions implemented remain unclear. The shortfall in leadership capacity is resulting in a palpable sense of anxiety among staff and governors at present. The seconded assistant headteacher has increased leadership capacity since Easter, easing the headteacher's individual burden and providing more support and challenge for staff. Among other responsibilities, the assistant headteacher has taken on the special educational needs coordinator role and designated child protection functions. This has ensured that the school is now able to meet statutory requirements, although the record of child protection training for staff and governors has yet to be updated.

Staff at all levels have been supported well through the introduction of new strategies such as the 'plan-do-review' cycle, appropriate training and regular meetings with the headteacher. Staff report feeling valued and involved in planning and reviewing action over the past few months and they have a greater appreciation of what needs to be done to sustain improvement. This has improved confidence and morale and staff are now rising to the challenges they face with vigour.

Governors have revised their committee structure so that they can keep a closer eye on progress against the areas of improvement specified at the last inspection. They have put strategies in place that are beginning to increase their involvement in the

life of the school and their engagement with parents. School policies have been reviewed and are due for ratification at a full governors' meeting in June. While governors report receiving good training and support from the local authority, they do not, as yet, have a comprehensive enough understanding of statutory requirements and the responsibilities that governance brings.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels – satisfactory
- Improve the school's governance – satisfactory.

#### External support

The local authority statement of action is matched closely to the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection and meets requirements. Consultants and advisors have made numerous visits to the school but have failed to pick up the headteacher's anxieties about how she can move the school forward without help from the local authority to tackle personnel and associated budgetary concerns. With the exception of the Early Years Foundation Stage, where there are clear signs of improvement, there is limited evidence of the impact of local authority actions so far in terms of outcomes for pupils. The partnership brokered with the local primary school is in its very early stages. There is uncertainty among the staff about how this arrangement will work and what benefits there will be because the terms of engagement are unclear.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Intensify actions to improve pupils' writing throughout the school as a matter of urgency.
- Ensure that staff check pupils' progress and understanding during lessons and consistently reinforce the importance of good presentation and layout of work.
- Work with the local authority to:
  - secure sufficient leadership capacity to accelerate the rate of improvement and move the school forward swiftly
  - resolve other personnel and associated budgetary concerns
  - clarify and agree terms of engagement, outcomes and success criteria with the partner school.
- Complete the updating of the record of child protection training for staff and governor training immediately.