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30 September 2010

Mrs M Tarn
Headteacher
Walbottle Village Primary school
The Green
Walbottle Village
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne
NE15 8JL

Dear Mrs Tarn

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Walbottle Village Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 3 and 4 March 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

the mentoring arrangements are the responsibility of the partner school, and the local authority regularly checks the support for, and development of, any Newly Qualified Teachers that are 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Newcastle.

Yours sincerely

Paul Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 3 and 4 March 2010 follow:

- Raise attainment and hasten the rates of learning and progress in English and mathematics lessons by ensuring:
 - the school's regular assessment information is always used to inform planning so that work is consistently matched to pupils' needs
 - all teaching interests and challenges pupils to achieve their best
 - marking is always informative and enables pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

- Raise attainment and ensure pupils make progressive gains in their learning in science by:
 - developing teachers' knowledge and skills, and the resources to teach the subject well.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring staff work together cohesively to support improvement by involving them more systematically in the evaluation of the school's work and in improvement planning
 - holding the staff to account for their pupils' progress
 - tackling staff absence rates
 - developing the role of coordinators and staff in monitoring their areas of responsibility by observing lessons, reviewing planning and pupils' work
 - ensuring the governing body holds the school's leaders to account for tackling weaknesses
 - ensuring the school improvement plan outlines key actions, measurable outcomes and precisely how success will be evaluated.

Special measures: monitoring of Walbottle Village Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 September 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the executive headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of the interim executive board, teachers and teaching assistants, and the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection, an executive headteacher has been appointed and works with the substantive headteacher at the school for three days a week. The governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board. A partnership with Beech Hill Primary School has been established and is providing leadership, training and expertise to improve a range of aspects of provision. The school day and classes have been reorganised. A teacher from Beech Hill is teaching in the Year 5/6 class for the remainder of the academic year to offer support. A new School Improvement Partner has started this term.

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

Pupils' progress has accelerated since the last inspection and the gap between the school's standards and national expectations is narrowing. Achievement is rising and attainment is higher than it was six months ago, largely as a result of improvements in teaching and leadership. Pupils are making better progress at Key Stage 1 and standards in numeracy and reading are above national averages. Progress has been made developing writing skills at Key Stage 1 and, although it is not as rapid, standards have risen and attainment is average.

Achievement is improving at Key Stage 2 but there is still some way to go in order to secure attainment in English and mathematics which is at least in line with the national picture, particularly in Year 6. This is mainly due to the low starting points of many pupils which are a result of previous disruptions to teaching. Pupils say they enjoy being more involved in their learning and the challenging targets they are set. Assessment information is effectively used to group pupils by ability because the tracking system has improved. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are receiving additional help and they are making more rapid progress.

Pupils are achieving more highly in science. Analysis of school data shows that attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is in line with the national picture. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills are increasing. A new science coordinator, working closely with an experienced subject leader in the partner

school, has introduced a two-year teaching cycle which is eliminating gaps in knowledge and understanding. Science revision sessions for Year 6 last term made a good contribution to raising attainment.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment and hasten the rates of learning and progress in English, mathematics lessons – good
- Raise attainment and ensure pupils make progressive gains in their learning in science – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour is improving as a result of gains in the quality of teaching and learning. Attendance remains average. The school meets current safeguarding and child protection requirements and pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and safe practices. Evidence from the visit indicates spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to be satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved and staffing is more stable. The proportion of good teaching is higher and inspection evidence confirms that the school is on track to achieve its target of 80% good or better teaching by the summer term 2011. There is still some way to go to ensure teaching and learning are consistently good across the school.

Pupils make the most rapid progress and learn quickly when tasks are tailored to their individual needs, age, and ability. Teaching is less effective and the pace of learning slows when too much time is spent on a single activity for all the class at the expense of individual learning. When this happens, some pupils are insufficiently challenged and do not make the progress they should.

The school has made good progress using assessment information more effectively to inform learning for all groups of pupils and ensuring work is better matched to pupils' needs. The quality of marking is improving and pupils know more about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers have more knowledge, skill and resources in science as a result of changes in leadership and management which have already made a good impact on attainment across the year groups. Inspection evidence indicates the school curriculum and care, guidance and support remain satisfactory.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Assessment information is always used to inform planning, all teaching interests and challenges pupils to achieve their best, marking is always informative and enables pupils to know how well they are doing and what

they need to do to improve, and developing teachers' science knowledge and skills and the resources to teach the subject well – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is improving because the school's capacity has been strengthened by the highly effective leadership provided by the executive headteacher and staff from the partner school. Managers at all levels are more skilled at monitoring and evaluating the work of subjects and the school. Priorities for improvement have been clearly identified and established by all staff working cohesively to support improvement. Teachers demonstrate a resolute determination to improve and the partnership with Beech Hill Primary has been instrumental to their progress. Leadership capacity to sustain and drive forward further improvement remains fragile because of the extent and temporary nature of support in the school.

Governance has improved and members of the interim executive board have a clear understanding of the steps that need to be taken to secure the future. Staff are more rigorously held to account for pupils' progress and school performance. The interim executive board has a well-informed picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the school improvement plan precisely outlines targets, action and outcomes.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve leadership and management – good

External support

Support from the local authority is good and rapid action was taken to make improvements. The statement of action which was judged by Ofsted to be fit for purpose is making a good impact, for example, attainment is rising and teaching improving. The school is benefiting from good strategic support and the local authority has taken important steps to improve school performance. The executive headteacher, who is a National Leader of Education, is working closely with the interim executive board which is steering improvement in the right direction.