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Thursday 11 November 2010

Mr Stephen Dent
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Whitehouse Road
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DN11 8EF

Dear Mr Dent

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

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 November 2010, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 Nottinghamshire and the Diocese of Hallam.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Raise pupils' achievement by:
 - raising pupils' attainment and improving progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2
 - increasing the proportion of pupils who exceed their age related levels in reading, writing and mathematics in all key stages
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better and, as a matter of urgency, ensuring that all inadequate teaching is eliminated
 - ensuring that all teachers are clear about what they want the pupils to learn and the small steps which build on pupils' levels of skills and knowledge, are planned carefully
 - ensuring that teachers have higher expectations of the more able pupils and their work is carefully matched to their capabilities so that they receive sufficient challenge
 - improving the quality of the academic guidance given to pupils.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the work of the school more rigorously to: identify clearly the priorities for improvement; set challenging targets; monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils and hold staff to account for pupils' progress.

- Ensure that the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage meets statutory requirements.

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

Report from the third monitoring inspection on Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 November 2010

Evidence

The Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with members of the governing body, staff and headteacher of the partner school.

Context

From September 2010, the Early Year's Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes have had their own classrooms. All pupils are now taught in the same classes throughout the week.

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

Pupils are making better progress, particularly in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the improvement the school has made to pupils' achievement has not been sufficient to overcome the lack of progress during the years that led to the school being placed in special measures. As a result, the 2010 nationally published outcomes for Key Stages 1 and 2 did not improve overall and remain low. Results at Key Stage 2 confirm a continuing picture of inadequate achievement. Despite these disappointing results, there is evidence of pupils making better progress in all year groups as a result of the improvements made to teaching and the better targeting of interventions. The school has quickly identified the reasons why pupils did not succeed in their tests and has amended the curriculum accordingly. Pupils now have increased opportunities to use and apply their learning through problem-solving activity in both mathematics and English. More able pupils are making better progress largely as a result of the improvements teachers have made to their questioning.

Pupils' reading is now improving because of a more rigorous programme of extra support for individual pupils identified as being behind their peers. There are also signs that the recent focus on guided reading is starting to improve this aspect of pupils' learning. The school's continued focus on letters and sounds, particularly with younger pupils, is also contributing to this improvement. During the visit, evidence was found suggesting that a broad range of subjects are being used more effectively to promote pupils literacy skills. By comparison, relatively less attention is being devoted to the promotion of numeracy. Pupils are enjoying the increased opportunities they have to undertake scientific investigations. The improving environment and well-managed reviews of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are contributing to better progress in all areas of learning in this key stage

Progress since the last inspection:

- Raise pupils' achievement by raising pupils' attainment and improving progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2 and for more able pupils – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Learning is rarely interrupted because there have been further improvements in pupils' behaviour. Attendance has improved although it is still average overall. The school council is going from strength to strength because of the high status this group is being given. These pupils meet very regularly and they appreciate the prominence given to their role in school.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching and use of assessment are improving, although it remains the case that insufficient lessons at Key Stage 2 are good or better. Teachers are more rigorous in the steps they take to build on pupils' previous learning. For instance, a Years 3 and 4 magnetism lesson commenced with an exercise to ascertain their existing understanding of this topic. This allowed the teacher to modify her plans to better meet the needs of the class. Generally, teachers are ensuring higher levels of pupil engagement by avoiding overlong introductions and encouraging more learning that is active. Teachers are reviewing progress more frequently and are encouraging learning from the making of mistakes. In an outstanding lesson in Key Stage 1, all pupils were challenged because a wide range of success criteria were identified and highly effective use was made of the high levels of adult support. Pupils successfully planned a fair test to identify the material most suited to wet weather. In the less effective lessons, it remains the case that pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to identify the success criteria associated with good progress. Pupils are receiving more guidance on what they must do to improve because their work is regularly marked and targets for improvement are identified. Older pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to participate in self and peer assessment although there are signs that they are responding to the comments in teachers' marking.

Teachers are making learning more interesting through the more frequent links to interesting contexts, sometimes in different subjects. This was most apparent in the Years 5 and 6 class where pupils were totally engrossed in their expedition to Antarctica. Teachers are identifying targets in other subjects that reinforce pupils' literacy development. For instance, encouraging pupils to argue persuasively about why penguins need to move their eggs. However, the comparative lack of focus on numeracy is limiting the challenge, particularly for more able pupils. The work seen in pupils' science books was not sufficiently challenging for a minority of pupils. They did not have sufficient opportunity to undertake investigations in which they could explore mathematical relationships, such as the link between the distance from the

light source and the object and the shadow size. Teachers are more consistently ensuring that different work is set according to the ability of pupils. Teachers are asking far more open-ended questions that allow more able pupils to make better progress, particularly in English. Teachers are encouraging pupils to discuss the more challenging questions, although there is still rather too great a reliance on responses being made by willing volunteers. It remains the case that older pupils are undertaking too many straightforward questions rather than being able choose those that are more demanding, particularly in mathematics. The school's recent emphasis on creativity, combined with strategies to ensure pupils are challenged, is increasing enjoyment and progress.

Progress since the inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better and, as a matter of urgency, ensuring that all inadequate teaching is eliminated – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management continue to improve. The governing body is beginning to offer constructive criticism in addition to supporting senior leaders in the school. For instance, they are trying to increase the amount of teaching assistant support in the school in order to further accelerate progress. Overall, the school is establishing a more rapid cycle of school improvement. The evidence the school gathers is more comprehensive and better organised. Crucially, it is being used more effectively to bring about improvement. For instance, the school is developing partnerships with other schools in order to plug any gaps in expertise. The use of data to hold teachers to account is becoming established practice and is positively influencing the provision for pupils of different abilities.

Opportunities for leaders to be involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school continue to grow. The teacher with responsibility for special educational needs (SEN) is using data particularly well to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for these pupils. The school has sensibly recognised these strengths and is extending her role to encompass equal opportunities more generally. The leader responsible for science has monitored this subject reasonably well and identified appropriate areas for improvement. The improvements made to the Early Years Foundation Stage are evidence of the effectiveness of leadership in this area. However, below headship level leaders are not yet fully established in their roles and lack confidence. These leaders are not consistently making sufficiently critical judgements, largely because they have not yet had enough opportunity to participate in joint reviews using robust criteria for evaluation. The headteacher has produced a reasonably accurate summary of the school's strengths and weaknesses, although it does not fully communicate that the school knows precisely what it must do to improve further. The school has correctly recognised that in further developing

its self-review summary it needs to involve all staff and members of the governing body more. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to meet statutory requirements.

Progress since the inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the work of the school more rigorously and
- Ensure that the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage meets statutory requirements -good.

External support

The impact of the external support is good. The school improvement partner (SIP) is providing an appropriate level of challenge and ensuring support generally that allows the school to demonstrate the extent it is developing its capacity for sustained improvement. The support provided by another local catholic primary school is beginning to provide much needed opportunities for leaders to more quickly develop clarity about good practice in a range of areas.