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18 November 2010

Mr Mark Cotton
Acting Headteacher
Castleway Primary School
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Dear Mr Cotton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Castleway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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 – **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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2010.

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects:
 - improving teaching so that more lessons are consistently good or better and engage and challenge pupils
 - ensuring that assessment informs teachers' planning and is used effectively to support learning for all pupils
 - developing and delivering a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, provides them with a wide range of positive experiences and effectively promotes community cohesion.

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable:
 - developing and sharing a vision for the school's improvement and sustaining the momentum to achieve this
 - monitoring the school's work rigorously and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses accurately to provide a secure basis for coherent improvement planning
 - ensuring that the curriculum meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Castleway Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and records of pupils' achievements and analysed pupils' work. She met with the acting headteacher, middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and the local authority. Seven lessons were observed, including two joint observations conducted with members of the senior leadership team and three phonics sessions were visited.

Context

Since the April 2010 inspection there have been changes to the leadership and management of the school. An acting headteacher from a local school led the school during the summer term of 2010. Two existing members of staff have been added to the school's senior leadership team. Since September 2010, a local leader in education, aided by one of his assistant headteachers, has provided support as acting headteacher. This situation is planned to continue for the current academic year.

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

Unvalidated, published results for 2010 indicate that pupils' attainment improved from 2009, but remains below the national average at both key stages. A greater proportion of pupils gained the nationally expected levels in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics but not all pupils reached their expected target levels. Pupils did better in mathematics than they did in English. Teacher assessments, at the end of Key Stage 1, showed a significant improvement in reading and writing but the middle and higher achieving pupils failed to achieve the highest grades. In both key stages, girls out-performed boys in reading and writing but boys performed better in mathematics.

Inspection evidence shows that there are early signs of improvement in the quality of the curriculum, in teaching and in the closer monitoring of pupils' progress but the amount of progress pupils make in their learning varies from class-to-class. Progress slows where teaching is not closely matched to pupils' learning needs. The school's targets for Key Stage 2 pupils in 2011 are unlikely to be met because of the gaps between expected levels and current attainment as a result of previous underachievement. This legacy of underachievement and the low levels of pupils' basic skills mean that pupils are not making the progress they should. More rapid gains are required in learning to ensure pupils catch up and reach the standards they are capable of achieving. The school has begun to address basic skills issues through the introduction of a well targeted programme for language development

and the specific teaching of phonics in some classes. A new system is in place to ensure provision meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and they make appropriate levels of progress. It is too early to judge the impact of this new tracking and intervention system on pupils' progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects – **satisfactory**

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils say they enjoy school. They have positive attitudes to learning and their attendance remains above the national average. However, a number of pupils arrive late for school at the start of the day. The school has put a number of interventions in place to monitor and improve pupils' punctuality. Pupils behave well in and out of class and generally work and play happily together.

The effectiveness of provision

School leaders have an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The quality of teaching and learning seen in lessons during the inspection visit was mostly good, although some teaching was only satisfactory and a small proportion inadequate. In all lessons there were strong relationships between staff and pupils. Teaching assistants are generally used well to provide effective support. During the inspection, the inspector observed pupils making better progress in lessons when they were engaged and the level of support and challenge was pitched at just the right level. In the best lessons, teachers plan tasks informed by their detailed assessment of individual capabilities to address gaps in pupils' learning and basic skills. Pupils are given opportunities to explain their learning, think through things with 'talking partners' and assess and improve their own work. A simple and effective tracking system has been introduced to enable teachers to track the progress pupils make in their learning. As a result, teachers have a more accurate knowledge of the levels at which pupils are working but not all are yet using this information effectively when planning lessons. There are variations in the quality of marking. Marking praises pupils for their work and confirms what has been achieved. The best examples are written in such a way that pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work. Staff development, supported by the partner school and local authority is helping to tackle weaker elements of provision and ensure there is a more consistent approach to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

A curriculum review was undertaken following the previous inspection. The planned curriculum is now broad and balanced and meets relevant statutory requirements including for the teaching of religious education. A two-year cycle of interesting cross-curricular topics has been planned to meet the needs of all pupils with support

from local authority colleagues. This includes enhanced opportunities to learn from first-hand experiences, including visits to a number of local places of interest, and more opportunities to promote community cohesion. Pupils, parents and carers report that the revised curriculum has enthused and engaged pupils more in their learning because it is more interesting, relevant and meaningful.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher is working hard to lay good foundations for school improvement. School self-evaluation accurately identifies stronger and weaker aspects of practice. There is a good understanding of what needs to change and the school's improvement plan focuses on key areas for improvement. There is a shared determination to improve the school. Staff and the governing body understand and support changes and plans for improvement because they have been involved in developing a shared vision and identifying priorities for school improvement. Significant improvements have already been made to the school's learning environment and the development of an appropriate curriculum.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders are more focused on improving attainment, learning and progress. The acting headteacher has developed an effective range of monitoring activities. This includes a more systematic and rigorous approach to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and analysing information about pupils' progress. For example, recently introduced meetings about pupils' progress are designed to ensure individuals are given work which enables them to make as much progress as they can.

The roles of senior and middle leaders have been allocated with clear expectations and responsibilities for the academic year but the role of subject leaders, even for well-established staff, is at an early stage of development. Governors have received local authority training. This is raising governors' awareness and improving their knowledge and understanding, which is enabling them to make a more effective contribution to monitoring and challenging the work of the school. The governing body has ensured that it now fulfils its responsibility to provide a statutory curriculum.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels including the governing body take responsibility and are accountable – **satisfactory**

External support

After the inspection in April 2010, the local authority submitted an action plan outlining how it would improve the school. Ofsted judged that some amendments were needed to the plan. Appropriate changes have been made to ensure the plan is

now fit for purpose. It now clarifies the difference between monitoring and evaluation, provides appropriate milestones and includes actions in relation to the provision of support for the governing body and information for parents and carers.

The acting headteacher plays a key role in managing external support to align with school priorities while building leader's capacity to sustain improvement in the future. The support of the local authority is good and the support from the partner school is excellent. For example, staff have had the opportunity to visit the partner school to look at how language development is planned and delivered. The School Improvement Partner makes much appreciated weekly visits to the school. Advisers and consultants run helpful staff development sessions and assist in the monitoring of the school's performance. The impact of external support is evident and is starting to lead to more rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the progress pupils make in their learning,