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16 June 2011

Mrs M Beesley
Headteacher
Hugh Gaitskell Primary School
St Anthony's Drive
Beeston
Leeds
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Dear Mrs Beesley

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Hugh Gaitskell Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 June 2011 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I found the on-site preparation on the afternoon of 14 June most helpful and thank you for giving time to this at short notice. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, members of the governing body and the school improvement adviser for talking to me.

Staffing has become increasingly stable over the year, although two teachers are on long term absence due to illness. Three new teachers have been appointed for September 2011. The school continues to work in a very challenging environment with high numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school outside the normal times. Since the last inspection pupil mobility in Year 2 and Year 6 has been particularly high.

As a result of the inspection on 24 and 25 November 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Evidence from lessons observed during the inspection, analysis of school data and work in pupils' books indicate a picture of accelerated and improving progress for all groups of pupils. As a result attainment is rising across the school and pupils' achievement is improving. This is because the quality of teaching has improved, enabling pupils to make up gaps in their learning. Teacher assessments for the current Year 6 indicate an improvement in attainment and progress when compared to last year's Year 6. The most marked improvements for this cohort are pupils' attainment in mathematics and the overall number of pupils making two levels of progress in English and mathematics. Early indications are that the school is close to meeting the government's target for the percentage achieving Level 4 or above in both English and mathematics; this is a good improvement on recent

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years. Pupils in the current Year 2 have also made accelerated progress but the overall picture of attainment is significantly affected by the high number of pupils joining or leaving the school throughout the year. Nevertheless it is evident that the school gives a high priority to narrowing attainment gaps for all pupils no matter how long they stay at the school.

The tracking of pupils' progress is more robust with greater attention given to the progress of different groups of pupils as well as individuals. Pupil progress meetings and recovery plans ensure that any pupils who are falling behind are given additional support to enable them to catch up. Programmes of support and interventions are more carefully planned and rigorously evaluated to ensure they have maximum effect. As a result the school is able to demonstrate that the achievement of the groups of pupils identified at the last inspection, White British boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is improving quickly and some are doing better than pupils from other groups.

The school has implemented a basic skills initiative working in collaboration with a local school to raise attainment in literacy and mathematics. This has made a marked improvement to pupils' attainment and progress in Key Stage 2 and particularly in Year 5 and 6 where it was initially introduced. In addition the curriculum has been reviewed and creative planning ensures pupils now have regular opportunities to develop, apply and practise their literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects in topic lessons. For example, pupils write diary entries for a Roman soldier or describe what an earthquake might feel like. A significant impact of this work is seen in pupils' accelerated progress and the much improved quality of writing across the school. During topic lessons pupils refer to their individual targets for writing and mathematics to ensure they practise their skills at the levels they are capable of and to move their learning on.

The headteacher and the two assistant headteachers continue to communicate high expectations and a clear vision for driving and securing improvement. Self-evaluation is increasingly robust. The quality of teaching has been improved through rigorous monitoring, sharing good practice, professional development and programmes of support where needed. Teachers are held more to account for the progress of pupils in their classes and any underperformance in their teaching. Decisive action has been taken to eradicate the less effective teaching. The set of non-negotiable expectations for staff to follow in each lesson are monitored regularly and are adhered to more consistently. There is now more teaching that is good and outstanding than previously. In all lessons seen during the inspection there was a clear focus on learning and careful thought given to planning a range of interesting activities to meet pupils' needs. Teachers used questions effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and understanding. Pupils' learning moved on at a good pace assisted by their excellent behaviour and high levels of engagement. Collaborative work, talk partners and working walls were used effectively to increase pupils' participation and independence. Pupils say that teachers make learning more fun with games, competitions and challenges and can see the improvements in their work. They have responded very positively to the school's new more interesting approach to homework and this is demonstrated in the quality

of their work in their learning logs. Purposeful challenges help pupils to develop their independent learning skills through investigation and research and then present their work in their own style.

The school has introduced a wider range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Rewards, incentives, more rigorous and regular analysis of attendance information coupled with a quicker response to non-attendance has led to a significant increase in attendance levels over this year. Attendance has a much higher profile and parents and carers are responding more positively to the school's efforts. Punctuality has improved and the number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly.

Following the previous inspection, Ofsted judged that the local authority's statement of action needed to be improved in a number of areas. The school's action plan was scrutinised during the inspection and through this and a discussion with the school improvement adviser it was clear how both the school and local authority are monitoring and evaluating the improvements taking place. The local authority is assessing the progress of the school on a regular basis and is providing effective support. Collaborative working with successful local primary schools has had a very positive effect on improving the achievement of all pupils, the quality of teaching, learning and attendance.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Brenda McIntosh
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 24-25 November 2010

- Urgently improve the achievement of all pupils but particularly White British boys, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that their attainment rises in mathematics and English by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to develop, apply and reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring support and intervention for pupils is more effective and enables them to recover the lost ground in their learning
 - ensuring learning and progress improves securely and quickly
 - ensuring a larger proportion of the pupils reach age-related expectations and the higher levels.

- Take decisive action to increase the quality and effectiveness of teaching so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - ensuring learning activities and challenges are always tailored to pupils' specific needs and focus sharply on promoting learning, developing understanding and extending pupils' skills
 - ensuring all staff rigidly adhere to the agreed teaching and learning strategies and procedures
 - eradicating less effective practice and improving pupils' engagement and enjoyment of learning
 - sharing and embedding the most effective practice in the school.

- Considerably improve pupils' attendance and reduce the level of persistent absence by:
 - developing more effective strategies for raising parents' and carers' awareness of the impact poor attendance and frequent absence has on their children's academic development
 - ensuring the active promotion of excellent attendance is embedded throughout the school and among pupils.