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8 July 2011

Mr M Cotton
Headteacher
Castleway Primary School
Castleway North
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Dear Mr Cotton,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Castleway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 July 2011, 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 April 2010. 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 27 April 2010

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects by:
 - 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 by:
 - 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 third monitoring inspection from 6 to 7 July 2011

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed eight lessons taught by seven teachers and the higher level teaching assistant, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and observed small groups of pupils working on phonics (the sounds letters make) activities led by teaching assistants. She also conducted learning walks in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. Discussions were held with the acting headteacher, the newly appointed headteacher, other members of staff and representatives of the governing body and local authority. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work in lessons and around the school were also observed.

Context

One of the Key Stage 1 teachers has returned to work after long-term illness and is currently supporting pupils in Year 5. Substantial changes will take place over the summer as the Local Leader in Education, partnered by one of his assistant headteachers, leaves the school and the newly appointed headteacher takes up her post. Three teachers will retire in August and the higher level teaching assistant has gained a post in another school. All vacancies have been filled. From September the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 will be taught in two mixed-age classes and Key Stage 2 pupils in four single-age classes.

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

Unvalidated Key Stage 2 test results for 2011 show that attainment has improved significantly from 2010 in both English and mathematics. Mathematics results are now nearer to the expected national average but English results remain below. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 increased in mathematics but decreased in English. School and local authority monitoring have correctly identified the need to provide more appropriate challenge for higher-achieving pupils. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 indicate that girls outperform boys, particularly in writing, and overall levels of attainment remain, as expected for this cohort, below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has achieved its challenging targets for pupils' progress. Focused intervention and booster activities have had a very positive impact on the amount of progress pupils make in their learning. The school's assessment information, work in pupils' books and inspection evidence from lessons observed indicate that the pace of pupils' progress has accelerated since the last monitoring visit. Low levels of attainment in literacy reflect the legacy of underachievement and a previous lack of confidence in teaching English in upper

Key Stage 2. Actions to overcome the legacy of underachievement are in place. This includes valuable booster sessions with the current Year 5 pupils, the continuous refinement of the new language development programme and effective staff training to enhance teachers' and teaching assistants' confidence and skills. Assessments are secure and leaders have a clear and accurate baseline from which to measure progress. Inspection evidence confirms that levels of attainment in the foundation subjects remain below national age-related expectations but are also improving.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in core and foundation subjects - good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance has improved and is now good. Behaviour in lessons seen during the visit was generally good. However, some low-level disruptive behaviour from a few pupils in satisfactory lessons reduces the amount of progress made. The school and local authority have identified the need for all staff to utilise the school's behaviour policy more consistently. Two pupils have been excluded this term. Relationships between adults and pupils are supportive and positive. There is an increasing sense of pride in the school. This is helping pupils respond to the higher expectations that staff have of them as part of the drive to raise attainment. The pupils are blossoming in the more-conducive learning environment and are eager and want to learn more.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve, reflecting the impact of training and support that staff have received. The large majority of teaching observed during the visit was good and the rest was satisfactory. Electronic whiteboards are used effectively to enhance learning. Pupils are motivated and more appropriately challenged in their learning. Teachers are planning carefully sequenced learning activities and making more-effective use of a greater range of learning resources and experiences. Parent workshops have been well received and pupils now take home mathematical as well as phonics and reading activities to complete.

Assessment procedures are strong in literacy and numeracy and developing across the rest of the curriculum. Teachers increasingly use accurate assessment information to plan for the individual needs of pupils with different attainment levels by providing different tasks and support. This is resulting in improved rates of progress for pupils. Information is used well to plan for lower-attaining pupils who receive effective support from committed and increasingly skilled teaching assistants. Teachers' gathering of assessment information from their own lessons to check pupils' progress is improving. The school has adopted a new assessment and marking policy. This is closely monitored. Best practice is being shared and the quality of marking and feedback is improving.

The school has implemented a well-conceived new curriculum which is broader, balanced and more relevant. It has been specifically designed to interest and motivate pupils and cut across subject boundaries. Key skills are being developed through a number of well-chosen themes with strong links to visits in the locality and global issues. Monitoring of the foundation subject curriculum by the subject leader is more rigorous. Effective assessment and tracking procedures are in place for the foundation subjects but it is too soon to measure the impact of changes made to enhance the assessment of the foundation subjects and religious education.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The capacity of leaders and managers is increasing because of the focused drive for improvement and the school's excellent leadership and management provided by the Local Leader in Education and his partner assistant headteacher. They have been instrumental in evaluating the school accurately, tackling weaknesses and in raising expectations and aspirations. Actions have been prioritised and with the support of colleagues, from the partner school and the local authority, the school has moved forward significantly since the previous monitoring visit. A shared vision for school improvement has been created. Very effective use is being made of available human, financial and physical resources. The school environment has been enhanced to create a positive and purposeful climate for learning. A 'can do' culture has been established throughout the school. Leaders and managers are striving to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good, that behaviour is managed in line with agreed policies and expectations and that pupils make the progress they should to achieve higher levels of attainment.

Middle leaders are more accountable and ready to take on board increased responsibilities, including monitoring and improving the quality of the curriculum. For example, they are now able to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the draft school development plan for 2011/12. Frequent checking and rigorous monitoring of the work of the school together with the use of co-coaching strategies to enhance the capacity of middle leaders have been particularly important in the drive for whole-school improvement.

Training and development have enabled the governing body to develop its expertise in challenging the school and governors have made a good contribution to the recruitment process for new staff. The governing body has ensured the curriculum, including religious education, meets statutory requirements and that the school's resources have been well managed to support improvements.

There is much to celebrate in terms of the progress the school has made this year. Leaders and governors are aware that recent improvements need to be sustained and built on in order to accelerate pupils' progress further and raise attainment to at least that of national age-related expectations.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

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

External support

The local authority is continuing to provide good support to the school. Effective teaching and learning reviews, work scrutiny exercises and careful monitoring of the school through regular meetings ensure the local authority knows the school's strengths and the areas it needs to continue to work on. Local authority colleagues have provided help with staffing issues and new appointments and specific training and development in literacy and numeracy, which will continue in the next academic year.

The support from the partnership school has been outstanding and laid excellent foundations for continued school improvement.