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18 November 2011

Mr P Seargent
Headteacher
Newhall Community Junior School
Chesterfield Avenue
Newhall
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE11 0TR

Dear Mr Seargent

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Newhall Community Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 16 November 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 on 8 November 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Parker".

Christopher Parker
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Eradicate underachievement in all year groups in English, mathematics and science by:
 - improving the profile of teaching and learning so that a significant proportion is good or better by January 2012, through raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - improving the use of assessment so that work is planned more effectively to meet the needs of all pupils, and challenges all abilities
 - quickening the pace of learning in all lessons by improving the quality of teachers' questioning skills and making better use of time, so that pupils can apply and practise their skills
 - ensuring that basic skills are taught progressively so that prior learning is built upon in order to accelerate progress.

- Improve behaviour so that all pupils have responsible and positive attitudes, and learn effectively, by:
 - fostering greater motivation in lessons by ensuring that learning is interactive, investigative and enjoyable through activities that develop pupils' independent and collaborative skills
 - increasing pupils' involvement in their learning through much clearer explanations of what is to be learned; using success criteria to measure progress; achieving greater consistency in the quality of feedback – both orally and written – so that pupils understand what they need to do to improve further, and teachers are well informed to plan the next steps in learning
 - securing pupils' confidence in the school's ability to deal with their concerns, and involving them more in how to improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - providing separate small-group work for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties
 - providing training for lunchtime supervisors so that they are better able to deal with unacceptable behaviour.

- Strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement by:
 - appointing, in partnership with the local authority, a substantive headteacher as soon as possible
 - improving the rigour of self-evaluation and improvement planning through challenging, clear and measurable targets linked to behaviour and achievement
 - developing the role of senior and middle leaders so that they are fully accountable for raising pupils' achievement and improving their behaviour

- developing the governing body's knowledge and understanding of provision and outcomes to enable it to effectively challenge leaders to secure improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Newhall Community Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on insert date of inspection

The inspector observed the school's work, visited nine lessons, scrutinised documents, and met with a group of pupils, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and assessment leader, the behaviour assistant, the local authority adviser and members of the governing body.

Context

The new headteacher took up his post in September 2011. One teacher has left the school, the assistant headteacher is on sick leave and the English subject leader is on maternity leave. To maintain the momentum of improvement and create a more settled staffing situation, the local authority has seconded two experienced teachers from a local school for this academic year. They have taken on leadership roles in the upper and lower school.

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

The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2011 show that attainment has risen to be significantly above the national average. The results in both English and mathematics are far higher than at any point in the last five years. Many of the pupils in last year's Year 6 made faster than expected progress, which allowed them to make up previously lost ground. However, there were a number of pupils who entered the school with high attainment who did not achieve the levels expected of them, largely because their progress was too slow in previous years. Analysis of the progress made by pupils throughout the rest of the school shows that there was still too much variation between year groups and between classes.

With several changes of teaching staff at the start of this term, there is clear evidence of greater consistency in lessons. In addition, focused support and training for individual teachers is helping to accelerate pupils' progress. Lessons have a clear structure and purpose, meaning that more pupils are making good progress. This was particularly evident in an English lesson in Year 5, where the pupils were successfully identifying elements of personification so that they could use them to improve their own writing. Progress is also being accelerated by managing groups more effectively. In a mathematics lesson in the parallel Year 5 class, the more-able pupils were quickly set a task to challenge them while the teacher worked with other groups. This meant that they did not have to work through tasks they were already able to do.

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

- eradicate underachievement in all year groups in English, mathematics and science – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The strong emphasis which the school now places on respect is building on the improvements in behaviour that have been achieved over the last year. The number of incidents of poor behaviour is falling, and relates to a small and declining number of pupils. The school can now point to a number of potentially vulnerable pupils whose behaviour has improved considerably. In lessons, pupils are increasingly attentive, and most concentrate well. They require fewer reminders to work hard. The approach, as part of the 'respect agenda', to rewarding good behaviour and good work has been very well received by the pupils. One pupil commented, 'Wherever you look, there is something to remind you about respect.'

Pupils have welcomed more opportunities to take responsibilities, for example, as prefects, school councillors and eco-councillors. They feel they are contributing to the improvements that are now permeating all aspects of school life. They are very clear that school is now a much more enjoyable experience and that they now 'want to come to school' and feel happy and safe.

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

- improve behaviour so that all pupils have responsible and positive attitudes, and learn effectively – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The profile of the quality of teaching has improved. More than half of the lessons seen during this visit were good. This marks a considerable step forward and is an indication that inroads are now being made into previous underachievement.

The headteacher has introduced a new teaching and learning policy which sets out a series of 'non-negotiable practices'. This is promoting higher expectations and has generated greater consistency in the way lessons are planned, structured and delivered. However, not all elements of this policy are well established. All lessons begin with a clear statement to tell the pupils what they are going to learn, along with what the teacher wants to see in a successful piece of work. However, these are not always sharp enough or framed in a way that is easy for the pupils to understand and use effectively. Nevertheless, the pupils say that they often find these very useful and are beginning to routinely check their own work against the criteria set out by the teacher. The other features of lessons which the pupils say have improved considerably are their more active involvement and the interesting content. Consequently, they say they find lessons more enjoyable.

The tasks that the teachers plan for the pupils are generally well matched to their abilities and needs. However, there are occasions when the tasks set for individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not take sufficient account of

those needs, presenting them with a task that they do not have the knowledge or skills to tackle. Most pupils are taking greater pride in their work, and their presentation is neater. However, the way that some pupils grip their pens and pencils, and form their letters, is poor. As a result, the fluency of their handwriting remains weak. Too few teachers provide a model of good handwriting.

The quality of marking is improving but remains variable. There are some examples of very effective marking to help the pupils to improve their work but there are also examples where not enough emphasis is given to identifying how the pupils can improve. The pupils say that they particularly like the opportunity to respond to their teachers' comments.

The conditions for learning throughout the school are much improved. The classrooms are tidy, and attractive displays provide support for learning as well as celebrating good work. The books in each classroom are now stored tidily, but there is still little on display to encourage the pupils to read.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher is providing clear and strong direction to the improvement strategy. He has quickly increased the expectations placed on both staff and pupils. The headteacher and staff have used the 'respect agenda' to create an increasingly welcoming and positive ethos throughout the school. The role of the upper and lower Key Stage 2 leaders is having a positive impact on establishing greater consistency through the implementation of the school's teaching and learning policy.

Working with the expanded senior leadership team, the headteacher has focused improvement activities sharply to bring rapid changes where they are needed. For example, they identified the need to develop the skills necessary for the more effective learning of a small group of pupils in Year 5, and have introduced a strategy to change the attitudes and approaches to the learning of these pupils. In a fairly short time, the attitude of some of these pupils has improved, and their learning and progress are now benefiting.

The governing body is maintaining the improved programme of monitoring. As a result of this and better use of its members' skills, it is keeping a close eye on the improvements made by the school. The governing body's increased ability to carry out detailed analysis of the school's performance data allows it to hold the school to account with increasing rigour.

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

- strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective and proportionate support. It is mindful of the need for the school to be able to sustain improvement without extensive external support. Consequently, support is now tailored to the individual needs of the staff, with the aim of bringing continuing improvement to the quality of teaching. The local authority adviser continues to robustly monitor the rate of improvement.