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12 July 2012

Mrs J Sword
Headteacher
St Paul's CofE Primary School
Victoria Street
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE4 7JU

Dear Mrs Sword

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Paul's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 July 2012, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2011. 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

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 Executive Director of Children's Services for Newcastle upon Tyne.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011

- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress across the school by:
 - ensuring all teachers use their knowledge of where pupils are at in their learning to plan and deliver lessons that more closely match the needs of all groups and individuals
 - providing an appropriate balance between learning that is teacher-led and that which allows pupils to engage practically and work independently
 - planning opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their basic skills within a range of contexts and subjects of the curriculum
 - applying the marking policy consistently so that all pupils know where they are in their learning, what they need to do next to improve and have sufficient time to act upon their teacher’s advice.

- Improve the impact of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, on pupils’ achievement by:
 - ensuring school development planning includes clearly measurable outcomes, within defined timescales, so that the impact of improvement initiatives on pupil outcomes can be measured
 - implementing a rigorous monitoring and evaluation timetable so that the impact of initiatives to improve provision and outcomes are clearly known
 - increasing the involvement of subject leaders and providing them with more opportunities to monitor the quality of provision and tackle weaknesses within their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring the governing body holds the school to account and is more rigorously involved in the evaluation of provision and outcomes.

- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children get off to the best possible start in their learning by:
 - using observations and assessments of children’s learning to plan tasks which meet their individual learning needs and interests
 - planning opportunities for greater adult-child interaction during those activities which children choose for themselves
 - involving children in making decisions about their own learning
 - ensuring continuity, progression and equality of opportunity for all children of Nursery and Reception age.

- Improve pupils’ attendance by engaging more with parents and carers to ensure that their children attend regularly so they do not miss out on learning.



Special measures: monitoring of St Paul's CofE Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including 11 lesson observations, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The inspector also scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, groups of staff and pupils, a representative from the local authority, the national leader for education who is working with school leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body.

Context

There have been few changes since the last visit. One teacher who returned from long-term sickness absence the week of the last visit is on long-term sickness leave again. Another teacher on long-term sickness absence at the time of the last visit has recently returned.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Teachers' tracking information on pupils' progress, Year 6 tests, book scrutiny and lesson observations show the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make are continuing to accelerate well in the majority of lessons. Regular key skills and reading sessions and sessions in teaching pupils about letters and the sounds they make, alongside increasing opportunities to practise literacy skills in other subjects are making a positive difference to pupils' progress and confidence in English. Provisional information on the 2012 Year 6 tests indicate the proportion of pupils gaining expected levels in writing has more than doubled since 2011. The proportion gaining higher levels has improved five-fold, albeit from a low base, and the gap between the school's achievements and that found nationally is narrowing well. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are also improving well. Provisional data indicate 89% of pupils have reached expected levels in the subject. Improvements in the quality of teaching and more focused intervention strategies are contributing to the hastening progress of different groups, including boys, pupils known to be entitled to free school meals and those who have a special educational need or disability. The achievements of pupils who speak English as an additional language continue to be among the best in the school. The gap between their achievements and other groups is narrowing effectively.

Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving successfully because strategies developed since the October 2011 inspection have made a significant mark on the quality of provision and leadership. A consistent system for tracking children's progress from Nursery to the end of Reception is in place and seamless planning across both classes provides equality of opportunity for all. Regular and appropriate assessments are recorded and acted upon to plan activities that move children on in their learning quickly. This includes making sure activities meet children's own interests and help them to develop decision making and independence as well as collaborative skills. Through timely



interactions with children working on their own chosen tasks, or more formal adult-led activities, children's speaking, listening and early literacy skills as well as their physical, creative and social skills are developing well. Although children's numerical achievements are lower than average, they are improving. Children welcome visitors with gusto and report proudly on what they are learning, showcasing their achievements in their learning journals and around the rooms enthusiastically. Children's learning journals have improved significantly and now celebrate children's achievements and progress over time. One mum spoke enthusiastically about how her child delights in sharing her journal with her.

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

- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress across the school – good
- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage – good

The quality of teaching

Pupils' progress is hastening because of the increasing proportion of good teaching and teachers' better use of information about pupils' current achievements to inform their planning. In many lessons teachers set varied tasks that move different groups on in their learning quickly and help them to develop their independent or collaborative skills. Occasionally, teachers still teach whole-class lessons where most pupils complete the same work and this slows the pace of learning for some. Overuse of worksheets in a few classes limits opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills. The school's marking policy is being more consistently applied. Pupils' speak enthusiastically about how the visual way teachers colour-code their marking helps them know quickly what they are doing well and what needs to be better. They are given time to follow up corrections and teachers' comments in later lessons. Pupils speak positively about how useful it is to have individual targets in their books because this helps them know what they are aiming for next.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour was not an area of concern at the time of the previous inspection but pupils note it continues to improve because teachers are making lessons more interesting. Behaviour seen around the school and in lessons during the visit was always positive. The school's behaviour management strategy is inconspicuously but rigorously applied. Teachers recognise and praise good attitudes and achievements and the few minor misdemeanours are recorded as a 'consequence'. Pupils accept consequences without rancour because they see the process to be clear and fair. Warm and respectful relationships typify all lessons and when pupils interact with each other and staff around the school. Pupils report that when they are new to the school they are welcomed in by everyone. They say they feel safe because of the good systems in place and say there is hardly any bullying or problems because everyone gets on so well together. Pupils' attendance rates are improving due to the proactive and sometimes innovative work undertaken. For example, through popular breakfast sessions where parents meet with staff on issues important to their children's schooling and where the headteacher and attendance officers raise awareness and provide advice on the importance of good attendance. Attendance rates are now broadly average.



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

- Improve pupils' attendance by engaging more with parents and carers to ensure that their children attend regularly so they do not miss out on learning – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders, the governing body and virtually all staff remain resolute in their drive for improvement. Actions taken are making a discernable difference to the quality of teaching and to pupils' progress. The school development plan has been sharpened further to make sure success criteria are clear and measurable and to hold accountable those responsible for carrying out actions. Middle managers and subject leaders are becoming increasingly skilled in observing teaching and in their roles identified in the rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, they have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for further development. They are using this information to improve their own practice and areas of responsibility and to support other staff to improve theirs, for example, through their contributions to the regular pupil progress meetings with teachers. These meetings focus on pupils' progress towards their targets. At the end of each meeting individual pupil progress plans are put in place identifying actions teachers will take to ensure those who are underachieving can catch up with their peers. These actions are followed up at the next meeting. The governing body is holding leaders to account more successfully through its increased involvement in the life of the school and through the further development of the curriculum committee. Members are now gathering substantial data and information about the school first-hand, through a programme of visits including discussions with staff and pupils. The curriculum committee is taking a lead in monitoring and evaluating action plans and information about pupils' progress, both at class level and by the groups identified at risk of underachieving. Minutes of meetings and reports show that the governing body is offering strong challenge to school leaders to ensure actions in improvement plans are making a difference to the quality of provision and to outcomes for pupils across the school.

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

- Improve the impact of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, on pupils' achievement – good

External support

The school has continued to benefit from high quality and judicious guidance and support from local authority professionals and leaders from the local outstanding school. The level is rightly decreasing as the school builds its own capacity for improvement from within its team of developing and generally highly motivated staff. Partners are currently reappraising the nature of future support and the exit strategy of their involvement. This is in-line with the local authority's statement of action provided to Ofsted following the school's inspection.

