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20 September 2013

Mrs Diane Blanckley  
Headteacher  
Oxclose Village Primary School  
Brancepeth Road  
Oxclose Village  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear  
NE38 0LA

Dear Mrs Blanckley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Oxclose Village Primary School**

Following my visit with Michael Wardle, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2013. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Sunderland.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Grieveson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in**

- Eradicate all inadequate teaching and make it all at least good by:
  - urgently raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - providing training which will teach all staff effective ways of checking on how well pupils are learning during lessons
  - providing training for staff to ensure that they make accurate checks on pupils' progress, so they are able to plan appropriately for the next steps in learning
  - ensuring that all staff mark pupils' work regularly and give feedback about what needs to improve that is understood and followed up by pupils in all classes
  - improving teachers' lesson planning so that it gives more scope for pupils to learn independently, including in the Reception class
  - ensuring that teachers' planning focuses on what and how children will learn and reduces the amount of time teachers spend on complicated explanations.
  
- Quickly raise pupils' achievement and attainment in mathematics by:
  - providing training for all staff to improve their subject knowledge
  - ensuring that there is a clearly understood programme of study in place to guide teachers in planning for the development of pupils' mathematical skills as they move through the school
  - ensuring that staff use up-to-date information about pupils' learning to plan the next steps
  - ensuring that leaders and managers check pupils' learning in mathematics frequently so they are able to spot underachievement and take prompt remedial action.
  
- Ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and staff at all times by:
  - making clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the maintenance of a safe and secure working and learning environment and holding to account those responsible for tasks associated with maintaining a safe site
  - taking prompt action to ensure that repairs are made to the fabric of the building, including fixtures and fittings, and taking immediate action should defects cause or be likely to cause injury to staff or pupils.
  
- Improve pupils' behaviour in lessons and raise attendance so that it is at least average by:
  - increasing the pace and challenge of learning so pupils do not become bored and disruptive
  - finding effective ways to support those pupils who are persistently absent, and their families, so that they attend school more regularly.
  
- Urgently improve leadership and management at all levels and governance by:
  - improving the way that the school checks its effectiveness by planning more regular and more rigorous checks on teaching and learning
  - ensuring that arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are rigorous and hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils make
  - providing timely and effective support for all teachers to improve their skills through regular training, especially teachers who are newly qualified
  - improving the accuracy and robustness of the data the school collects about pupils

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 September 2013.**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with groups of pupils, the acting headteacher, associate headteacher, other senior leaders, a local authority officer, and the Chair and five members of the governing body. The school's action plan, lesson observation records and the most recent self-evaluation documents were evaluated.

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher left her post at the end of the summer term 2013. The deputy headteacher remains as acting headteacher and she continues to receive support, although reduced in time, from the headteacher at Newbottle Primary School. He is a local leader in education. A specialist leader in education, from the same school, continues to support initiatives to tackle weaknesses in mathematics. An experienced deputy headteacher from Barnes Infant School has assumed the role of acting deputy headteacher. An additional senior member of staff has been recruited to the leadership team, on a temporary basis, and has a responsibility for mathematics. The school remains heavily reliant on temporary staff.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

In national Key Stage 1 assessments in 2013 there was a marked improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining expected levels in writing and mathematics, but not in reading, where results remained similar to those attained the previous year. There was however a decline in outcomes at the higher Level 3, where scores in each subject declined. No pupil attained a Level 3 in writing.

There is clear evidence in pupils' workbooks that the actions taken during the summer term to tackle underachievement show improvement in most year groups across the school, including in Year 6. However, the substantial gaps in pupils' basic skills amongst 11-year-olds were not closed sufficiently, resulting in test results at Key Stage 2 declining in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to 2012 scores. Mathematics outcomes were particularly poor at Level 4, although there was a modest improvement in the proportion gaining the higher Level 5. Few pupils reached Level 5 in writing. Girls outperformed boys in each subject. Outcomes for those pupils known to be entitled to free school meals were below those of other pupils in each subject, and most notably in mathematics where this group was almost a full year behind the rest of the Year 6 cohort.

Inspection evidence confirms that the progress being made by pupils in other year groups is inconsistent and mirrors the quality of teaching. Good progress is being made in those classes where the match of work is consistently and closely aligned with the next steps pupils need to take to progress their learning further. Teachers here are using the school's increasingly detailed assessment evidence to ensure that the respective needs of different groups and individuals are understood and are being met.

Where progress is limited and in some cases inadequate, it is because teachers do not have a secure enough understanding of pupils' prior learning, or recognise the significant gaps in their core skills. Consequently, activities in lessons do not enable pupils to push their

learning forward to help them catch up. In these classes, more-able pupils are not being challenged enough.

Detailed data analysis and tracking procedures are providing senior staff with the evidence needed to identify underachievement and target interventions. It is providing teachers with the evidence they need to underpin their lesson planning, but its use is not consistent.

### **The quality of teaching**

While teaching is improving, too much requires improvement and some aspects remain inadequate. The training being provided is clearly helping teachers to acquire better skills and knowledge, but a wide degree of inconsistency remains in teachers' classroom performance. Only some of this is attributable to changes in staffing.

Senior leaders have established heightened expectations of pupils' capabilities so that attainment targets are more challenging and teachers are held directly accountable for the progress pupils make. Teachers are now also expected to use assessment information to ensure that their planning accords with the learning needs of all pupils. Practice here remains variable. While lesson objectives are more expectant of the standards pupils should reach, there is a distinct lack of commonality in how teachers are following through on these objectives in the classroom.

Good teachers amplify their high expectations into meaningful and well-matched lesson activities which are securely underpinning good progress and higher standards. Underachievement is recognised and dealt with effectively. A very good example of intervention work with underachieving Year 6 pupils resulted in them making quick gains in their writing because of high quality teaching based on good subject knowledge and a keen awareness of the learning needs of this group.

In some classes, teachers do not demonstrate in their planning or their teaching that they have a clear line of sight between what pupils should learn and the activities they provide. These teachers tend to lack a detailed understanding of what is required to help pupils to take the next steps to make progress. This is leaving pupils confused and frustrated and is clearly holding back potential. Lesson observation evidence points to some teachers lacking a secure enough grasp of how to teach aspects of mathematics. Where this occurs, pupils receive a confusing mix of poor explanation and inappropriate activities.

In the Reception class children have settled quickly and are already confident in their surroundings. Adults have speedily established a good rapport with them so that positive interaction between children and adults is already clearly in evidence. A secure basis for promoting children's learning is rapidly being established.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils confirm that behaviour is improving and say that disruption in lessons or in the playground is rare. This perspective is confirmed by inspection evidence. Most pupils consider that lessons are becoming more enjoyable and stimulating so that their interest is captured and maintained. They enjoy school and show a strong desire to do well. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally good. The large majority show a keen interest in their work, particularly when the tasks they are given are challenging and take their learning

forward. They are compliant and willing to engage, even when activities do not interest them or meet their needs.

Absence rates are declining in response to decisive actions taken by senior staff. Expectations about regular attendance are much clearer to parents and any matters of concern are followed through robustly.

Further positive progress has been made on tackling the maintenance and safety of the building. The school is currently awaiting the results of a health and safety review.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Senior leadership capacity has been extended further through the acquisition of additional senior expertise from Newbottle Primary School and Barnes Infant School. This is making sure that the senior team is providing the acting headteacher with much-needed support in confronting the substantial issues which the school continues to tackle. The impact of the work undertaken by the consultant headteacher from Newbottle Primary School, although reduced in time, continues to be pivotal in tackling weaknesses in teaching. Improvement planning remains focused on the right priorities, although senior staff carry a significant range of responsibilities. Greater thought needs to be given to the expectations of other staff to lead on key initiatives.

Senior staff are accurate in their assessments of the quality of teaching and learning and this is enabling them to support and challenge all teaching members of staff with confidence. Training is becoming increasingly customised around the needs of individual teachers and support staff. Teaching assistants for example, will shortly benefit from training to improve their knowledge and skills in aiding pupils' mathematical development. This is a welcome and much-needed development.

Governance continues to strengthen. The additional expertise noted at the time of the previous visit has added significant value and is enabling a higher degree of scrutiny of the school's work. Governors demonstrate a secure understanding of priorities and have formed an accurate assessment of the school's progress. Headteacher challenge meetings are now routine and documentary evidence points to a rigorous examination of practice and pupil outcomes. This evidence is providing governors with a much stronger evidence base from which to hold senior staff accountable.

The school is projected to assume academy status during the current academic year although the timescale for completion is unclear and requires confirmation at the earliest opportunity. Governors and senior staff are keen to progress matters quickly so that greater assurance can be given to parents and staff about the school's longer-term future.

### **External support**

The school continues to receive effective external support from the headteacher of Newbottle Primary School. Much-needed additional senior leadership capacity has been added through the secondment of experienced teachers from Newbottle Primary and Barnes Infant schools. A high degree of well-targeted support remains in place supported by local authority staff. Regular challenge meetings still occur under the direction and a local authority officer. These are particularly beneficial in up-skilling leaders to conduct sharper monitoring and evaluation. Mathematics training for teaching assistants is timely.

Governors benefit significantly from continued local authority support.