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22 September 2010

Mrs J Naylor
Headteacher
The Henry Prince CofE (C) First School
Mayfield
Ashbourne
DE6 2LB

Dear Mrs Naylor

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Henry Prince CofE (C) First School

Following my visit with on 21 September 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

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 governors, the diocese of Lichfield and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2009

- Improve standards and achievement in writing across the school by: improving the teaching of letter formation, sounds and words; ensuring that pupils apply their writing skills across all subjects; and informing pupils about what they need to do to reach their targets.
- Accelerate the rates of progress of all pupils and ensure they are consistent across the school by analysing the performance of specific groups so that teaching can address their needs.
- Ensure teachers use assessment information to match their teaching to pupils' abilities and give feedback that helps pupils know what they have to do to improve.
- Improve the management, support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Establish a clear direction for the school and ensure that the actions taken by school leaders are effective in improving pupils' achievement.
- Make sure that governors hold the school to account for the standards it achieves and the rates of pupils' progress by providing them with the information needed to make decisions and judge the impact of the school's work.

Special measures: monitoring of The Henry Prince CofE (C) First School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 21 September 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, checked pupils' work in books, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body, the local authority consultant headteacher and the local authority improvement officer.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the acting headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher. The Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 teachers have both left the school. The headteacher now teaches each morning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The previous Early Years Foundation Stage teacher now teaches the Key Stage 1 pupils. The governing body has appointed a Key Stage 2 teacher who commenced her duties at the start of the school year.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection, the 2010 end of year tests and teacher assessments have been undertaken and show that pupils' attainment has continued to rise. At the end of Year 2, all pupils reached the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics and some pupils exceeded this level in reading and mathematics. Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 has also continued to rise in all subjects. Regular hand-writing practice, increased opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across many subjects and better feedback to pupils on how to achieve their writing targets are all contributing to improved pupils' attainment in writing. However, because of the legacy of underachievement, there are still very few pupils throughout the school who exceed their age-related levels, especially in writing.

The school's tracking information, monitoring by the local authority and lesson observations during the inspection show that pupils' progress and the quality of their learning in lessons continues to improve. The headteacher's increased monitoring skills have enabled her to carry out a more rigorous analysis of the achievement of specific groups of pupils. Teachers' greater understanding of how to use this information is helping ensure that more pupils receive the correct degree of challenge in lessons, especially in Key Stage 2.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve standards and achievement in writing across the school by: improving the teaching of letter formation, sounds and words; ensuring that pupils apply their writing skills across all subjects; and informing pupils about what they need to do to reach their targets - satisfactory.

- Accelerate the rates of progress of all pupils and ensure they are consistent across the school by analysing the performance of specific groups so that teaching can address their needs - good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Most pupils continue to behave well. Improvements to the quality of teaching and better class management strategies are helping ensure that pupils concentrate more on their learning and are more focused on their tasks.

The effectiveness of provision

Since the last monitoring inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, especially in Key Stage 2. Teachers have received training from the local authority on how to focus the lesson activities on pupils' learning needs and identify pupils' next learning steps. Although observations during the inspection showed that this had improved, there were still some lessons where the activities were not focused well enough on pupils' learning and pupils were not guided through the small steps which help ensure effective learning. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 know their targets for improvement. The quality of marking continues to improve, with some helpful comments to pupils on how to improve their work. However, the link between the pupils' targets, teachers' marking and what pupils are learning in lessons is not yet strong enough and consequently reduces the effectiveness of the feedback pupils' receive.

The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved further as teachers are becoming more aware of the need to focus their teaching on the needs of individual pupils. The school's monitoring of the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities shows that progress is accelerating rapidly.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure teachers use assessment information to match their teaching to pupils' abilities and give feedback that helps pupils know what they have to do to improve – satisfactory.
- Improve the management, support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities - good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

With support from the local authority, the headteacher has established a clear direction for improvement based upon raising pupils' achievement. The key to the improvements since the school was first subject to special measures has been the focus on improving the quality of pupils' learning through better quality teaching and developing more rigorous systems for self-evaluation and improvement. As a result of this focus, the headteacher now carries out more analytical lesson observations and identifies more clearly the main areas for improvement. The regular pupils' progress meetings between the headteacher and each member of staff have increased teachers' awareness of their accountability for pupils' progress. At these meetings, specific pupils' achievement targets are discussed and recorded which is helping focus all improvement activities on raising pupils' achievement.

The governing body has continued to receive training from the local authority which has increased governors' knowledge and understanding of how to hold the school to account for its performance. Some governors have attended training during the school day, led by the local authority, and have been guided through the aspects of good practice that are becoming embedded into the school. The headteacher provides the governing body with detailed information about pupils' attainment and progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Establish a clear direction for the school and ensure that the actions taken by school leaders are effective in improving pupils' achievement – good.
- Make sure that governors hold the school to account for the standards it achieves and the rates of pupils' progress by providing them with the information needed to make decisions and judge the impact of the school's work – good.

External support

The support provided by the local authority has continued to be central to all improvements. The chair of governors says that he appreciated the advice given to the governing body on all aspects of school improvement, especially concerning the appointment of the headteacher.