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Mr Steve Williamson
Headteacher
Hylton Red House Primary School
Rotherham Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR5 5QL

Dear Mr Williamson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hylton Red House Primary School

Following my visit with Clive Petts, additional inspector, to your school on 3 – 4 December 2009, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2008. 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 – **satisfactory**

Newly Qualified Teachers – **may not 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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Sunderland local authority.

Yours sincerely

Moirá Fitzpatrick
Additional inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Hylton Red House Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 3-4 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 12 lessons and two assemblies. They examined pupils' work in books, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils in Year 4 and Year 6, members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection there have been significant staffing changes. A permanent headteacher took up post at the beginning of November. Five permanent teaching staff and three temporary teachers left in July. In September, a permanent teacher was appointed to the speech and language unit. An Interim Executive Board was appointed from 1 September, replacing the governing body. There is currently one temporary teacher covering a vacant post.

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

The 2009 national test results for Year 6 pupils were on target for English, but results in mathematics were lower than the school expected. Overall, standards, as measured by the national tests were well below average, at both the expected level and the higher level. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 showed a similar picture of low attainment with too few pupils reaching the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

While pupils' work in the current term shows that there is some increase in the proportion making satisfactory progress, there remains a significant minority who are not. There are two main reasons for this. One is that teachers in some classes are still not making accurate assessments of pupils' learning, so that pupils are not provided with the correct starting points for new learning or given enough time to consolidate what they have learned. The other is that interventions to support pupils' specific weaknesses, which were put in place in September, have not yet been evaluated to discover where they are and are not being effective in helping pupils to overcome weaknesses in basic skills.

The new headteacher has moved quickly to establish a more rigorous and regular pattern of monitoring and evaluation. Overall, the best improvement in progress is being made in writing, because the literacy leader has regularly monitored teachers' skill development and its impact on the outcomes for pupils during the last year. Improvements in planning, teacher evaluations of writing and the application of



reading and writing skills in the wider curriculum are all supporting pupils to increase their rate of progress in developing literacy skills. Pupils' progress in mathematics has not improved as much because there are still weaknesses in subject knowledge, which prevent some teachers from spotting quickly where there is misunderstanding or when pupils are finding the work too easy. The use of mathematical skills remains less well developed across the wider curriculum, so a crucial opportunity for pupils to apply what they know and thereby consolidate their learning, is missed. Nevertheless, the improved curriculum is providing a potentially good vehicle for accelerating learning.

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has taken a significant step forward from the same time last year and reflects how well staff have developed their practice. As a result, children are now making good gains in their personal, social and emotional development which is providing a strong base for further learning. They are confident and able to access activities independently, and are beginning to talk to each other about what they do. They feel secure within the setting and know who their key worker is, so they know where to turn for help or support. The letter and sounds programme has been adapted so that it targets children's needs more precisely. This is ensuring that they now have the right level of challenge and all are making similar progress from their different starting points.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise the attainment and achievement of pupils – **satisfactory**

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The arrival of the new headteacher has signalled a number of significant changes for pupils. Their opinions have been sought on several issues. For example, Year 6 pupils have visited the local academy to see what good ideas might be used in their own school and a head boy and head girl have been elected. The introduction of a new uniform for Year 6 now includes a blazer and older pupils proudly tell you the new school motto is, 'Look smart, Think smart'. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Attendance continues to be average and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

The effectiveness of provision

Some teachers have made steady improvement to their practice, either because their subject knowledge or their planning for teaching basic skills has improved. However, the impact of considerable targeted and sustained support from the local authority has been variable and has not resulted in secure improvement for some staff. The improvement of teachers' knowledge of National Curriculum levels has not



been successful in all cases so there is still some inconsistency in the use of assessment across the school. This means that learning tasks still do not always match pupils' needs closely enough. Work in books shows some pupils steadily losing ground since the beginning of term because some teachers' expectations are not based on regular, accurate and secure assessment of learning.

Where teachers' have improved their understanding of pupils' needs, they are able to plan tasks that allow them to work independently. Where this is becoming most effective, teachers are now giving pupils a tight timescale for each task. Pupils thrive in lessons such as these because they are well challenged and the teacher has high expectations of the pace at which they should work and of what they can accomplish during the lesson. Where weaknesses remain, or have occasionally increased, teachers are still not alert enough to the different responses of pupils, they do not adjust their questions to provide the correct challenge for pupils of differing abilities and sometimes do not take decisive action when they realise that pupils are confused.

The curriculum continues to develop new themes, such as Nelson's Navy and the Solar System, that inspire and engage pupils. It is evolving at a steady pace so that improvements are secure. Teachers are gaining confidence in planning for the use of basic skills, as well as subject specific skills, and pupils are able to explain which skills they have learned or used in their various projects this term. Pupils and teachers alike are enthusiastic about the topics, so that independent learning, with pupils pursuing the aspects of the topic that interest them most, is becoming more common outside of literacy and numeracy lessons. Several pupils in different classes remarked on how they had done research at home either on the internet or in books, to find out more about the subject they were studying. Colourful and informative displays are now a feature of corridors, so that pupils of all ages can share in each other's learning. Since the last monitoring inspection, the school has used data from more regular assessments to identify pupils who are underachieving and to provide additional support to overcome weaknesses. It has devised a wide range of interventions to meet specific needs this term. However, there has been no evaluation of the impact of these measures this term, so the school has no clear overview of their effectiveness. Evaluations are scheduled for next week which senior leaders are confident will give them a clear picture of what has worked and which pupils have made the expected progress as a result. A good range of visits is organised to support new themes and topics in the curriculum. These, together with extra-curricular clubs, are increasing opportunities for pupils to extend their understanding of the wider world and to develop new skills and talents.

The school site is a safe and secure place for pupils. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place and meet requirements. The school has good procedures for risk assessment and health and safety procedures.



Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the overall quality of teaching so that it accelerates learning – **satisfactory**
- Increase the accuracy of assessment – **satisfactory**
- Adapt the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of pupils – **satisfactory**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The recently appointed headteacher has brought valuable expertise and a sense of urgency to the work of the school. Within a few weeks he has made thorough, detailed and accurate evaluations of teaching, learning and pupils' attainment and progress. He has moved quickly to review policies and strengthen teachers' understanding of their role. Performance management targets have been reviewed and adjusted, so that teachers are now accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. Staff are aware of the headteacher's high expectations and their support for new measures is evident in their development of classroom display which is providing targeted support for pupils' learning. The headteacher has won the confidence of staff in a very short time. After many changes of headteacher in the last two years, staff at all levels express strong confidence in the new leadership to set a clear, sustained direction for the school's work. Frequent shifts in emphasis in the past have left many staff uncertain about the main priorities, resulting in uneven progress on the key issues from the last inspection. This is no longer the case. Staff are now very clear about what is expected of them and of their role in improving the school.

The headteacher has reviewed the roles and deployment of senior staff to give better support to raising standards. For example, the deputy headteacher is now timetabled to teach groups in classes where there is a high level of underachievement. Senior leaders now make regular reports to the headteacher and Interim Executive Board (IEB) on progress in the core subjects and the Early Years Foundation Stage, and against the school's priorities, so that action planning is based on up-to-date information. While roles and responsibilities are generally effective, the most senior leadership roles are not defined as sharply as they could be and do not always carry with them the accountability that they should. The headteacher has rightly identified a need to separate out middle leadership roles from senior leadership and to provide training and professional development for staff to fulfil their roles more effectively.

Members of the recently formed IEB regularly visit the school to monitor progress against the issues and against actions agreed with the headteacher. The headteacher has quickly established more regular monitoring of lessons, assisted by



members of the Interim Executive Board. This has resulted in an accurate picture of teaching across the school and in a robust action plan for rapid improvement. This careful scrutiny of the school's work has improved the leadership's knowledge of what is working well and what still requires significant improvement. The impetus for improvement is now much stronger than formerly, because IEB members have brought necessary expertise and robust challenge to their role in helping the school improve quickly. Weekly meetings with the headteacher, linked to challenging performance management targets, keep a careful check on the rate of improvement. The headteacher and the IEB share an ambition to raise standards and the quality of provision quickly. They are determined to eradicate the long-standing underachievement which has beset pupils' attainment.

Links with parents and carers have been further strengthened since the previous visit. This was reflected in the good attendance at a meeting held by the headteacher to set out how parents and carers could help to improve their children's learning. Parents have been fully supportive of new initiatives, such as the change of uniform for Year 6 pupils. Some have already volunteered for in-school support, such as organising the change of reading books, which is done more frequently since the arrival of the new headteacher. Inclusion practices have been much improved. Pupils in the speech and language unit are now represented on the school council and have planned links with other classes.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, including developing the skills of leaders and managers – **satisfactory**

External support

The local authority has continued to support the school well on a number of issues. Tailored support for individual teachers has been ongoing since the previous visit, with local authority consultants working alongside staff in the school. Further support for the Early Years Foundation Stage is helping staff become more accurate in their assessments of children's learning so that they are able to plan the next steps in learning more accurately. Improvements to the speech and language unit have embedded through good support from a specialist consultant, brokered by the local authority. The quality of provision in the unit is such that it is now attracting new pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

These remain the areas for improvement identified by the previous section 5 inspection.

