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18 November 2009

Mrs Janice Craven
Headteacher
Cragside CofE Primary School
Westloch Road
Cramlington
Northumberland
NE23 6LN

Dear Mrs Craven

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cragside Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 to 17 November 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2008. 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 **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, the Diocese for Newcastle and the Director of Children's Services for Northumberland local authority.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Cragside Church of England Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 16-17 November 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised school documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle managers, a group of pupils, members of the governing body standards committee, and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the monitoring visit in June 2009 a new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been appointed and is part of the leadership team. One member of staff left at the end of the summer term and one member began her maternity leave. Two teachers have been appointed to lower Key Stage 2. Staff absence has reduced dramatically and the school now has nearly a full complement of teaching staff; only one teacher is currently on sick leave.

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

Lesson observations undertaken during the visit, school data on pupils' past and current performance and outcomes of the regular observations conducted by senior and middle managers show that pupils' attainment in lessons has improved well since the time of the last inspection. Pupils are making much better progress in lessons because of teachers' much better focus on meeting pupils' differing levels of ability in their lesson planning and delivery. Pupils with very specific needs, the few looked after children and those who find learning difficult are making similar progress to their peers because of effective targeted help in lessons, additional interventions and also the strong pastoral support and care provided to them by all staff.

Currently, some of the most vulnerable pupils are being provided with one-to-one support. Although it is too early to measure the impact of this in terms of their progress, pupils' feedback indicates it is already making a positive difference to their self-esteem and confidence. Those who have started the programme are still fully involved in it even though it takes place after the normal school day.

Pupils' attainment, as evidenced in end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 tests in summer 2009 has improved considerably and significantly higher than that found at the time of the inspection in November 2008, where standards were judged inadequate. Senior managers are aware that higher ability pupils' and boys attainment in some subjects has not accelerated as quickly. They have developed a range of actions to remedy this.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics and ensure that the curriculum is planned to cater for the needs of all pupils in these subjects - **good**

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour remains good across the school. Pupils who spoke to the inspector say lessons are rarely disrupted through poor behaviour of pupils and that they all, 'get on well with one another'. They confidently report that they feel safe and learn how to stay safe well; saying they know who to go to if they have a concern and that any rare incidents of bullying are tackled well by teachers and adults. Pupils continue to report positively on how their life at school has been transformed since coming to the new building and they appreciate the benefits of wide open spaces, well-resourced classrooms and range of extra curricular activities that are adding to their sense of well-being and enjoyment. Actions taken to promote the culture of a Christian school, following their diocesan inspection in July 2009 has helped to develop further a caring, inclusive and nurturing ethos. A strong sense of harmony, trust and respect pervades the whole school.

Senior managers continue to take concerted action to improve attendance There has been a reduction in pupil absence and in the proportion of persistent absentees because of actions that include early discussions with parents of children who are absent without authorisation, warning letters and occasionally, prosecution where necessary. However, some parents are still taking their children out of school during school term for holidays and this, together with swine flu outbreaks in mid-July and October has pegged attendance to broadly average; which represents improvement since the time of the inspection.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance – **satisfactory**

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve and a higher proportion is judged good or better than at the time of the last visit. No lessons were judged inadequate during this visit; most were good and some outstanding. As a result pupils' progress in lessons is now considerably better. Good relationships between staff and pupils are the norm. In virtually all lessons more effective planning and better-matched activities are helping to make sure work is better-pitched to pupils' current levels of ability and then used to set challenging targets for improvement. Teachers' increasingly high expectations, improved use of resources and interesting activities are helping the vast majority of pupils to move on quickly in their learning. Pupils report that teaching is more fun and they are working harder. Occasionally, there

are some satisfactory lessons where progress slows because pupils are not fully stretched or challenged.

Consistent application of the marking policy is making sure that all pupils know how well they are doing. In some subjects marking is also helping children to know what they need to learn next. Senior managers are taking action to tackle this in-subject variation.

Together, the more consistent use of regular and now accurate assessment across the school, better planning and differentiation is making a positive difference to pupils' attitudes, enjoyment, achievements and progress. Additional interventions are better targeted to those in most need because of the accurate evaluation of pupils' current progress. Accurate assessment information is also helping to improve the planning of the curriculum. The increased investment and improvement in the use of information communication technology (ICT) is supporting the development of a more cross-curricular approach; including within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils say the greater use of ICT is adding to their enjoyment of lessons.

Senior leaders are successfully improving the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since the last visit, partnership working with the co-located private nursery has enabled shared use of a large playing area. The school has improved outdoor provision further by adding climbing and other interesting equipment and enabling children's access to the adjoining part of the school playing field. Together, these actions have made sure that all children in Reception have opportunities to learn and develop their skills and understanding indoors as well as outdoors. Additionally, improvements to the curriculum and organisation are developing children's sense of responsibility, and independence skills well.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Provide enough space for children now in Reception to learn effectively outdoors in all areas of the curriculum – **good**
- Improve the accuracy of assessment of learning and ensure that this information is used effectively to set appropriately challenging targets for pupils – **good**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The strong foundations being laid at the time of the last visit have provided the bedrock for good improvement. Virtually all the developments identified at the time of the last visit are being firmly embedded in teachers' practice across the school. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and middle managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and work very well together as an extended leadership team. They continue to focus resolutely on the areas of improvement identified at the time of the last inspection, and subsequent monitoring visits and there have been some significant successes. For example, the improvement in the standards

pupils attain and the progress they make in lessons, the higher proportion of good or better teaching and virtual elimination of unsatisfactory teaching. The leadership team hold high expectations of themselves and others and are taking strident action to eradicate any remaining inconsistencies in planning and assessment. Teaching is monitored regularly and any areas for improvement are identified, acted upon and then checked, through regular feedback, training and individual coaching. Middle managers are empowered to lead improvements across their areas of expertise and as a group of managers. They monitor the impact of their actions rigorously and regularly. They are held to account well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and the increasingly competent governing body's standards committee. The standards committee regularly monitor the progress the school is making. Through purposeful questioning, and use of monitoring information, they are better at holding the whole senior leadership team to account.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that senior leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the school efficiently and give more direction to the work of middle managers - **good**

External Support

The local authority continues to provide good, timely and effective support to the school. This support has been reducing and becoming more bespoke as senior leaders are building their own capacity to sustain improvement. The school now has the same support as other primary schools in the local area. Middle managers commission the advice and support from the local authority's consultant and cascade any subsequent training and developments themselves. This innovation is valued both by the school and the local authority and is making sure that resources and support are well targeted to meet the diminishing additional needs of Cragside.

Priorities for further improvement

Continue to embed improvements against the key issues identified as a result of the school's inspection in November 2008.