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25 November 2010

Mrs Mary Langton
Headteacher
Appleton Primary School
Appleton Road
Hull
HU5 4PG

Dear Mrs Langton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Appleton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 November 2010, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2009. 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

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 Director of Children's Services for Hull.

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that safeguarding procedures are secure.
- Raise pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6, particularly in English, by:
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment to support their planning
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write freely and at length
 - making lessons more challenging, particularly for the more able.
- Ensure that leaders and managers take swift and effective action to drive school improvement by:
 - rigorously monitoring the school's work, particularly teaching and learning
 - holding all teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their classes
 - involving fully governors in monitoring and evaluating
 - promoting pupils' understanding of diverse communities.
- Improve provision and leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that children's welfare is secure
 - planning challenging and purposeful activities to extend children's learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy
 - ensuring that assessments are accurate and reliable to inform future planning.

Special measures: monitoring of Appleton Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff and a group of pupils. She scrutinised the school's pupil progress tracker, safeguarding procedures and the work in pupils' books in mathematics and English.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection a member of staff has retired and two new members of staff have been appointed, one in Key Stage 1 and one in Key Stage 2 to reduce class sizes for the older pupils. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has moved to the Nursery class and an experienced teacher from the school has moved from Key Stage 1 to take over the Reception class. One member of staff is currently on long term sickness absence which is being covered by the teacher who normally covers teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time. A new parent governor has joined the governing body. The number of pupils on roll continues to rise and there are an increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages who have little or no spoken English.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection leaders and managers have focused their work on improving pupils' progress in mathematics and writing. They have introduced a daily mental mathematics session and have reorganised the curriculum to give more opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills across the day. There has been success in improving pupils' quick recall of number facts and in raising the profile of mathematics across the school. Pupils spoken to eagerly talked about 'reaching for the stars' in mathematics. They enjoy the early morning mathematics sessions and said, 'It switches your brain on and we know what we are aiming for and get a certificate when we have achieved it.' Writing is improving across the school and there are pockets of accelerated progress in most year groups.

Particular successes are evident for those pupils who have additional writing or mathematics sessions and for Year 6 pupils who have one-to-one tuition. In the mental mathematics sessions observed, pupils settle quickly and the lessons move along at a quick pace with teachers encouraging pupils to use mental strategies to give answers. In the best examples, all pupils were challenged for the whole session and resources were used very well to help the less-able pupils to achieve. In these sessions, pupils made accelerated progress. The school's own data show that more pupils are working at and above age-related expectations in mathematics since the

last visit. The school's previous work on improving reading across the school is beginning to impact on pupils' ability to write at length, especially for more-able and older pupils. Recent test results for both key stages show that the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has closed and boys outperform girls. There is also a narrowing of the gap between reading and writing.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6, particularly in English – good.

The effectiveness of provision

In the Early Years Foundation Stage there have been many changes since the last monitoring inspection. The introduction of new staff alongside a reorganisation of the indoor and outdoor learning areas in the Nursery building have much improved the learning environment and children's safety. A new entrance has also been organised to enable parents and carers to engage more with their child's learning at the beginning and end of sessions. Activities are welcoming and there is a better link between different areas of learning. For example, better opportunities for children to practise basic skills in all areas of the provision and an increased number of activities which link mathematical and language development to knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children were observed in the Reception class working diligently with the teacher to retell the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' on a huge roll of wallpaper. They were drawing the story and using their knowledge of sounds to spell common words while also developing their vocabulary, constantly encouraged by the teacher. Children worked cooperatively and with perseverance and curiosity, keen to complete the work. Opportunities for children to practise their counting and calculation are available in the outdoor area. They were eager to go outside, despite the inclement weather, and take part in measuring and counting activities in 'the King's counting house', where they could compare the lengths of broad beans.

A larger proportion of good teaching was seen across the school during the monitoring inspection. The pace and challenge in lessons has improved and there is a better match of activities to pupils' abilities especially in mathematics lessons. The two new teachers have settled into the school and are being well supported by colleagues and senior leaders.

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

- Improve provision and leadership and management in the Early Year's Foundation Stage – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and managers of the school, including the governing body, are involved fully in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. There is an increased involvement by the pupils' progress committee in challenging data and asking searching questions about pupils' performance. An increase in the frequency of visits by members of the governing body to monitor the school's work alongside senior leaders has developed their skills and knowledge. The governing body is also accessing relevant training from the local authority to support its work and governors have produced their own effective development plan to ensure they keep on track. Safeguarding procedures are kept up to date and meet current regulations. The school continues to monitor pupils' progress rigorously and this is used effectively to identify pupils' underachievement and to plan intervention. However, the detailed data that teachers collect is not yet being used by some teachers to plan the next steps in learning for different groups of pupils in writing lessons. There is evidence of better practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is not yet being shared sufficiently across the school.

Leaders and managers meet regularly and carry out a wide range of monitoring activities which involve all staff. However, the evaluation of these data is not yet detailed enough to identify which specific actions are having the most impact on accelerating pupils' progress and in improving teaching and learning. A new inclusion manager has taken up post and she is being effective in managing support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and in supporting new pupils who have little or no spoken English. Data show that the progress of these pupils is accelerating as a result of the support they are receiving. All teachers now have a subject responsibility and they are developing their roles in monitoring attainment in their subjects well.

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

- Ensure that leaders and managers take swift and effective action to drive school improvement – good
- Ensure safeguarding procedures are secure – good.

External support

The local authority has continued to offer the school a high level of support. The involvement of the partnership school has been effective in developing the Early Years Foundation Stage provision and management. Increasing involvement in local cluster-school meetings is giving teachers opportunities to network with other schools and moderate their assessments of pupils' progress. The School Improvement Partner and local authority officers have brokered good support for the school to date and senior leaders are now in a position to be more selective about the support they need. This is evident in the most recent raising attainment plan which has been developed with much greater school involvement.