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20 January 2011

Mrs Elizabeth Pollard
Headteacher
Beverley St Nicholas Community Primary School
Beverley
HU17 0QP

Dear Mrs Pollard

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Beverley St Nicholas Community Primary School

Following my visit with Robert Jones, additional inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 January 2011, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2010. 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 – 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2011

- Raise standards and improve achievement for all pupils in all subjects, particularly in Years 1 to 4 and in mathematics throughout the school, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment information to support their planning
 - lessons challenge all pupils appropriately, particularly the more-able pupils
 - low-level disruptive behaviour is managed consistently and effectively.
- Improve the school's capacity for sustained improvement by ensuring that leaders and managers:
 - take swift and effective action to improve behaviour so that all pupils feel safe at school
 - monitor the school's work rigorously, particularly the quality of teaching and learning, so that these are consistently good
 - hold teachers to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes
 - promote effective teamwork and better staff relationships across the two sites.
- Ensure that the governing body contributes more effectively to improvement by:
 - monitoring the work of the school rigorously
 - holding leaders to account for the school's overall effectiveness.

Special measures: monitoring of Beverley St Nicholas Community Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 January 2011

Evidence

Inspectors visited 15 lessons and observed the work of teaching assistants and teachers working with individuals and groups. Daily routines were observed including registration, start-of-day activities, assemblies, break time and lunchtimes. They scrutinised documents, including the school's plans for improvement and the school's records of pupils' attainment. Inspectors met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the local authority lead officer and School Improvement Partner, members of the governing body including the chair of governors and spoke to some parents and carers. Inspectors also scrutinised the work in pupils' books from across the school.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been some changes to the school's context. One member of the teaching staff has left and a temporary teacher has joined the school. Four teachers have changed the year group that they are teaching and one teacher was unwell and absent from duty during the inspection. Three new parent governors have been recruited and two additional experienced governors appointed by the local authority. The local authority has increased its level of support to the school and the headteacher is provided with advice and support from an experienced headteacher.

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

At the time of the previous inspection attainment across the school was low. Inspection evidence shows that, although there have been some improvements; this continues to be the case. Mathematics remains a relative weakness across the school. Unvalidated teacher assessments results in 2010 for Year 2 pupils indicate that attainment for this group was below average, with the attainment of boys being lower than girls in all subjects. Very few pupils reached the higher Level 3 in any area. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 6 shows that standards were broadly similar to the previous year. Although the attainment of boys and girls is similar in English, girls do not do as well as boys in mathematics. The progress of pupils across the school remains inconsistent, attainment remains too low in too many year groups and there is still much work to do in order to tackle the pockets of underachievement that remain in the school. Across the school there are pupils who show weak basic skills, such as poorly formed handwriting and common words spelt wrongly. This is symptomatic of basic skills not being consolidated well enough. As a consequence, by the time pupils reach upper Key Stage 2 they still have much ground to make up in order to reach the standards that they are capable of. The school has begun to put procedures in place to tackle underachievement, such as target-setting and improved marking, but, as yet, they are not consistently applied or having a strong enough impact on raising achievement. There are procedures in place to monitor

and track the attainment and progress of pupils closely and regular pupil progress review meetings are holding teachers to account for the progress that pupils are making.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement for all pupils in all subjects, particularly in Years 1 to 4 and in mathematics throughout the school – inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils say that behaviour has improved recently and there are now fewer incidents of poor behaviour in classrooms. A key factor in this has been the establishment of a 'nurture room' where some pupils now receive most of their lessons. Inspection evidence shows that this provision is largely meeting the needs of this small group of pupils in the short term. While this has improved classroom behaviour, the school is aware of the longer-term need to reintegrate these pupils into their classes.

Behaviour observed on the playground, in the dining room and assemblies and as pupils move around the school has improved significantly. However, at break times and lunchtimes there is sometimes a lack of activities for all pupils to participate in. While some pupils are engaged in playing football, others engage in boisterous behaviour or wander around the playground. Pupils say that they would like more to do at these times. Pupils are adequately supervised. In lessons, the quality of behaviour directly matches the quality of teaching. If pupils are not engaged, then poor, low-level disruptive behaviour follows. This typically shows when pupils have been listening to their teacher for too long or their tasks are uninteresting and do not challenge them.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Take swift and effective action to improve behaviour so that all pupils feel safe at school and ensure that low-level disruptive behaviour is managed consistently and effectively – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching observed during this inspection ranged from good to inadequate. Although there are signs of improvement, overall it is still not strong enough to accelerate all pupils' progress and raise standards, particularly as inadequate teaching has yet to be fully eliminated. The school has put in place a number of strategies designed to bring improvement in the longer term. These include: a common lesson planning format, clearer learning intentions, and marking with clear success criteria. However, the impact of these new developments remains inconsistent.

In the most successful lessons planning identifies clear, well-focused learning intentions which are routinely shared with pupils. Some teachers make good use of success criteria to help pupils know what constitutes good quality work. However, lesson objectives are sometimes not explained well enough to pupils or are overly detailed. This means that pupils are unsure of what they have learned by the end of the lesson. In some cases, pupils copy down the learning objectives but do not understand them. Teachers sometimes have low expectations of pupils and work that is of low quality or presented poorly passes without comment.

Although there is appropriate challenge for all ability levels in some lessons, this is not common in all lessons. Where teaching is effective, tasks are interesting, varied and well matched to the full range of pupils' abilities. Consequently, pupils have high levels of motivation, they behave well and remain focused for the whole lesson. Where tasks are repetitive, mundane, ill matched to the needs of all pupils or lack challenge, pupils lose concentration and go off-task, particularly during the 'independent' part of lessons. In some lessons, teachers rely on over-long explanations. This means that the pupils spend long periods of time listening to the teacher rather than being actively involved in learning. Sometimes poor, low-level behaviour follows.

Sometimes, questioning fails to engage or challenge pupils. For example, pupils are sometimes asked questions and single-word answers are accepted. This does not challenge pupils well enough or show high enough expectations. In the more successful lessons, teachers skilfully prompt pupils for fuller answers which build up their confidence and their speaking skills. The environment for learning has been well developed and some teachers use 'working walls' successfully to help pupils become independent learners. In these lessons, pupils use displays as a reference. In one such lesson, pupils were multiplying using the grid method, looking up the steps on their working wall. In less-successful lessons, working walls were not present or not used, which required pupils constantly to ask the teacher for help. Although some good examples of teaching assistant support were observed, some teaching assistants lack the skills and expertise to manage small groups when they are working away from the classroom.

There have been improvements to the school's approach to marking but the quality varies. Some marking is clearly linked to success criteria and contains sharp, specific and positive comments that leave pupils in no doubt what they should do to improve. The best marking ensures that pupils are able to respond to their teachers' comments, which helps them to improve their work. However, some marking is cursory or not specific enough to help pupils make the progress of which they are capable. On some occasions teachers have provided pupils with correction activities but the pupils have not been given the opportunity to complete these.

A very recent development to provide individual pupils with targets has been trialled with the oldest pupils and this is working particularly well with Year 6 and there are plans to extend this practice to other classes.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There is a shared determination to tackle the issues that were identified at the last inspection. Many teachers state that they want to improve the school for the benefit of pupils. Of particular note is the effectiveness of actions that have been taken to improve classroom behaviour. Pupils, teachers and some parents endorse the value and impact of the newly created 'nurturing room'. Pupils state categorically that classroom behaviour is better now and almost every pupil whom inspectors spoke to stated that they feel safer in school now.

Senior leaders are aware of where most improvement is needed and underperformance is being challenged; teachers who need extra training have individual support plans in place. Plans for improvement are in place and some progress has been made in addressing the most important issues. However, plans sometimes lack clarity and there is confusion between what needs to be improved, what actions will lead to improvement and how improvements will be checked and evaluated. Although there has been an increase in the amount of lesson observation, monitoring plans do not currently link closely enough to the school development plan. Additionally, the written evaluations of teaching do not sufficiently focus on the impact that teachers are having on the learning and progress of all pupils within each class. While much information is available to senior leaders, such as their evaluations of teaching and the half-termly tracking of pupils' progress, this is not currently routinely shared with governors, such as through the headteacher's report to governors. Consequently, this limits governors' ability to challenge and appreciate the work of the school.

There is now a full complement of governors for the first time in five years and two additional, experienced governors have been appointed to strengthen the governing body. Members of the governing body have undertaken a wide range of training related to their role in challenging the school and holding leaders to account. Governors want to do their best for the school and its pupils. There is evidence that governors are developing a better understanding of their role and they are certainly asking more questions about the work of the school. However, the impact of this work has yet to be fully developed.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the school's capacity for sustained improvement – satisfactory
- Ensure that the governing body contributes more effectively to improvement - satisfactory

External support

Support for the school has been satisfactory. Following the last inspection, the local authority produced the required statement of action. On evaluation by HMI, the plan was judged to need some small amendments. An amended plan was provided at this inspection and includes greater detail, particularly with regard to how it will evaluate the success of its support. Much support has been provided by local authority consultants. The local authority has used its powers to appoint two additional governors.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the school development planning process so that:
 - there is greater clarity of aims, actions, timescales and success criteria
 - there is a rigorous programme of monitoring to check on the implementation of planned improvements
 - more detailed information about the outcomes for pupils and the quality of provision is provided routinely to governors.