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Wednesday 1 December 2010

Mrs Palmer
Gorefield Primary School
High Road
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Wisbech
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Dear Mrs Palmer

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Gorefield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Monday 29 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to appropriate training and mentoring.

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 Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Sheelagh Barnes
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010

Develop and implement robust procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. Use the information to identify what needs to be done to bring about improvement in pupils' achievement especially in Key Stage 2.

Use assessment systems to greater effect to accelerate pupils' progress by:

- ensuring lessons include work which challenges all groups of pupils, especially the more able
- identifying sharp targets for pupils that make clear the next steps in their learning.

Improve leadership and management at all levels to ensure that all areas of the school's work, especially pupils' achievement, are monitored carefully to provide an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness and make this central to strategic planning for improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Gorefield Primary School

Report from second monitoring inspection on Monday 29 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons in all classes and scrutinised pupils' workbooks. A range of documents were evaluated, including evidence of monitoring, development plans and local authority records of visit reports. The inspector met with senior and middle leaders as well as the chair and vice chair of the governing body.

Context

Since the previous visit the headteacher and a class teacher have returned from maternity leave. One teacher and the temporary acting assistant headteacher have left.

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

There has been a trend of improvement in the progress pupils make and the standards they attain since the previous inspection. In all classes observed, pupils' learning was at least satisfactory. In half of the classes it was good. However, despite this improving picture, school data confirms there have been variations in progress between some year groups and subjects and between boys and girls in the last year. For example, in Year 3, boys' progress in writing is good, while that of girls is satisfactory. In Year 4, boys made too little progress in reading and writing, although the progress of girls was satisfactory. However, apart from this, the progress made by boys and by girls in reading, writing and mathematics across the school, is generally at least satisfactory. The progress of some groups of pupils, for example boys and girls in Year 2, is good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers.

Results of end of year tests for Year 6 in 2010 indicated that standards attained were slightly above average. These pupils made satisfactory progress. The combined three year average for the contextual value added for mathematics was in line with national data, but for English was significantly below. This is because, while pupils are now progressing in line with pupils nationally, this has not always been the case.

Pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 make good progress overall, although school monitoring indicates that there are still variations on occasion across time.

Judgement

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

- Bring about improvement in pupils' achievement especially in Key Stage 2 – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour continues to be good. Pupils enjoy school and attendance has improved from the average levels at the time of the previous inspection to above average currently. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy, which they put into practice. The take up of healthy balanced lunches is around half. Pupils make a positive contribution to both school and local community through responsibilities and duties, such as school council and running clubs and activities. They contributed to writing the school code of conduct, formulating a questionnaire and helping to plan the development of a play area in the village. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are considerate and respectful of others.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Teachers have greater confidence in understanding of National Curriculum levels, particularly in mathematics. Planning for lessons takes greater regard for the differing needs of pupils in the mixed age and mixed ability classes. Assessment has been developed for reading, writing, mathematics and science. The information from assessment is now used with greater consistency when planning lessons. Because of this there is more regular challenge for potentially higher achieving pupils and provision of smaller steps and greater support for those who find learning more difficult or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Curriculum planning for subjects is structured, following a three-year cycle to allow for the differences in age in each class, while still ensuring that lessons are interesting and exciting. As a result, pupils generally remain on task, demonstrating good levels of focus and commitment. This was particularly noticeable in a lesson on co-ordinates for pupils in Key Stage 1, where groups completing problems using laptop computers worked cooperatively and with high levels of concentration. They required minimal intervention by their teacher.

Opportunities for pupils to practice writing skills purposefully have been improved. Subjects such as history and geography now provide opportunity for pupils to develop their writing imaginatively and are marked for developing literacy skills as well as for the subject content. The whole school has worked to develop a marking policy, linked to the assessments in writing and mathematics. In addition, pupils all have individual targets for the next steps in their learning. These are clearly displayed in classrooms and on books and known by pupils themselves. Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills in evaluating their own progress towards their targets. Teachers refer to these targets when marking work. The way that teachers' marking praises pupils is consistent across the school. However there is still some inconsistency in the frequency with which teachers point out to pupils, in their marking, the thing they need to concentrate on next. While short-term learning

targets for individual pupils are challenging, not all long-term learning targets are as demanding as they could be. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains a strength. Provision for pupils in the oldest class has improved significantly.

The schools' effective strategies for identifying individual pupils' additional learning needs in English and mathematics are continuing to bear fruit. Additional help is being provided for a number of pupils who have been identified as being in most need. A new, whole school, system of assessment has been put in place to monitor pupils' progress in science. As yet, although it contains information on the standards pupils have attained, it is too new to show progress. The newly appointed science coordinator has prioritised the development of pupils' investigative and enquiry skills. This approach is still very new, but pupils are developing confidence in learning to set up their own experiments and test their theories. This is particularly benefitting potentially higher attaining pupils in enabling them to make progress towards level 5 in investigative science.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are robust.

Judgement

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

- Use assessment systems to greater effect to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring lessons include work which challenges all groups of pupils, especially the more able – good
 - identifying sharp targets for pupils that make clear the next steps in their learning – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, supported by the local authority, is working successfully to embed ambition and drive improvement. The clear focus on the areas identified for improvement is beginning to impact on standards. All staff are working with one purpose to tackle the areas identified as requiring improvement. Governors have sharpened their practice, as a result of training. They have restructured their committees and are now increasingly confident to interpret data and ask challenging questions. Their presence in the school has increased, as have their links with parents. Governors' contribution to school development planning and self-evaluation is developing incrementally.

Self-evaluation is accurate and linked sensibly to the 'raising attainment plan' by the headteacher. Challenging targets are being set for improvement, both at whole school and also at individual subject levels. The coordinators for English, mathematics and science have all created well thought out action plans for their subject. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning, in English is

well established. Monitoring in mathematics is developing and for science, where the coordinator has been in post for less than a term, it is in early stages. However, the headteacher and deputy regularly monitor teaching and learning in all classes. They are supported in this by the local authority. School leaders methodically tackle issues related to improving the quality of education. The specific current focus is on improving the quality of teaching in all classes to be in line with the best. This is already showing improvement and all of the teaching observed during the monitoring visit was at least satisfactory.

Judgement

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

- Develop and implement robust procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on learning – good.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels to ensure that all areas of the school's work, especially pupils' achievement are monitored carefully to provide an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness and make this central to strategic planning for improvement – good.

External support

Governors report that local authority governor training has been of good quality and has helped them to realise the significance of their roles in holding the school to account. The local authority has worked well with the school in devising a single post-Ofsted action plan and providing appropriate support from consultants to meet the identified focus for work. This now includes support for leadership in science, as well as mathematics and English. The continued support from another local school has been beneficial in many areas and in particular in the mentoring of the newly qualified teacher.

Priorities for further improvement

No additional priorities were identified.