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10 February 2011

Miss L Hoyle
Acting Headteacher
Luddenden Dene CofE (VC) Junior Infant and Nursery School
Dene View
Luddendenfoot
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX2 6PB

Dear Miss Hoyle,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Luddenden Dene CofE (VC) Junior Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 February 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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 – satisfactory

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 Calderdale.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 15 and 16 April 2010

- Ensure that all safeguarding procedures are applied rigorously at all times.

- Improve the overall quality of teaching so that pupils' progress accelerates by:
 - planning work that is suitably matched to pupils' differing ability levels
 - ensuring that all pupils are fully aware of what they are expected to learn by the end of a lesson
 - making the best use of available time and resources so that pupils stay motivated and engaged throughout the lesson
 - eradicating inadequate teaching.

- Review and adapt the curriculum so that it allows staff to plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills.

- Ensure leaders, manager and governors monitor all aspects of the school's provision rigorously in order to produce:
 - accurate self-evaluation
 - sharply focused improvement planning.

- Accelerate children's progress in the Early Year's Foundation Stage, by:
 - improving the use of assessment information so that children's progress can be accurately tracked
 - using this information to plan more precisely the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring that the outdoor area in the Nursery provides a high quality environment for learning.

Special measures: monitoring of Luddenden Dene CofE (VC) Junior Infant and Nursery School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 February 2011

Evidence

The inspector visited all seven classes in the school. He scrutinised relevant school documents and reports. Discussions took place with senior school leaders, a forum of teaching and non-teaching staff and groups of pupils. The inspector also spoke with members of the governing body and a local authority representative.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection the school has appointed a deputy headteacher who started in January 2011. Staffing continuity in Key Stage 2 has been further disrupted by the long-term absence of a member of staff and a vacant post which has not been filled. Two supply teachers are covering these positions temporarily. A number of pupils have left the school since the last monitoring inspection.

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

There is no doubt that increasing numbers of pupils are making better progress than they were. This is helping some of them to recover the lost ground in their learning caused by their previous underachievement. However, this is by no means the case for all pupils or in all subjects. The school's data which are now more secure indicate that in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 the large majority of pupils are moving purposefully towards reaching age-related expectations. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 has been adversely affected by some behaviour issues and turbulence in staffing. While these pupils too are starting to make faster progress they have a bigger deficit gap to close. There are concerns regarding: more-able pupils in Years 3 and 4, pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities in Year 3, and whether Year 6 pupils will progress fast enough to reach their end of key stage targets. The school has a coherent plan of intervention to further accelerate the progress of these groups over the coming months.

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

- raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 – satisfactory
- accelerate children's progress in the Early Year's Foundation Stage – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Revised playground rules and a new programme of activities have been introduced with pupils playing in a number of designated zones. Pupils' behaviour in the playground during this monitoring inspection gave the inspector no cause for concern; although in one class some pupils' behaviour was challenging.

The effectiveness of provision

Staff are more assured in their delivery and pupils are generally more responsive and engaged in their learning. There is a greater consistency in staff adherence to agreed protocols for: approaches to learning; planning; target setting; marking; and feedback to pupils. Pupils are being given more opportunities to think creatively, learn in a more 'hands on' way and reflect on and evaluate their own learning and development needs. Teaching assistants are also being deployed more effectively. Most pupils know exactly what is expected of them by the end of the lesson because staff share clear lesson objectives with them at the start. This leads to less disaffection, though some pupils' attitudes to learning are an issue at times in one class in particular. In some lessons pupils were totally absorbed in their learning when: using all their senses to conduct an experiment that compared and contrasted the size, weight, shape, appearance and taste of a range of exotic fruit; and constructing a persuasive argument to support why they would locate a settlement in a particular place having reviewed a series of alternate locations. These features are not yet embedded throughout the school and account, in part, for the variability in rates of pupils' progress that persists. In the Early Years Foundation Stage planning is sound and teaching is purposeful, engaging and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils who respond very positively to the creative and independent learning opportunities they are given.

The school's work to review and adapt the curriculum has picked up momentum since the last monitoring inspection. A series of linked themes are being used to enable pupils to develop, apply and consolidate their skills, knowledge and understanding of key concepts and information more readily. There is some autonomy in terms of delivery and the learning approaches adopted with built-in opportunities for pupil choice. Staff are still getting to grips with the new arrangements and although it is not yet embedded the initial signs are that it is proving more interesting, enjoyable and inspiring for pupils and is positively contributing to the acceleration in their progress highlighted previously. The work to improve the quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues purposefully. Opportunities for independent learning both inside and outside have been extended as have the number of visits, visitors and the diversity of topics covered.

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

- improve the effectiveness of teaching by:
 - planning work that is suitably matched to pupils' differing ability levels – satisfactory
 - ensuring all pupils are fully aware of what they are expected to learn by the end of a lesson – satisfactory
 - making the best use of available time and resources so that pupils stay motivated and engaged throughout the lesson – satisfactory
 - eradicating inadequate teaching – satisfactory
 - review and adapt the curriculum so that it allows staff to plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Strong and transparent leadership is being exercised by the acting headteacher who now faces the additional challenge of quickly establishing a cohesive working partnership with the new deputy headteacher. Leaders continue to drive improvement by systematic implementation of the change strategy and regular and candid scrutiny of all aspects of the school's work to determine the impact of actions taken. Leaders are using the information derived to inform and refine planning. Their growing influence is reflected in the improving profile of teaching and pupils' progress. Staff are being rigorously held to account by leaders who have introduced a new competency framework based around the professional standards for teachers with which all staff must comply. However, the brand new leadership partnership which is not yet proven, continued instability in staffing at Key Stage 2 and the uncertainty surrounding a long-term headteacher continue to compromise the capacity of the school to plan a long-term strategy to drive and secure the necessary improvements.

This monitoring inspection included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found that they meet current requirements. A safeguarding governor has been appointed and all staff have received update training. A behaviour review has taken place and the school has commissioned an upgrade to the perimeter fencing and CCTV security system. Members of the governing body have a range of education, business and finance skills together with local knowledge and experience which they are starting to use to challenge the school more robustly. They have reconstituted a number of committees to allow a sharper focus on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to drive improvement in all aspects. Consultation with parents and carers raised concerns over the frequency and quality of school communications. This resulted in the production of a regular newsletter and a parents' forum to discuss behaviour and pupils' progress issues.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- ensure that all safeguarding procedures are applied rigorously at all times – satisfactory
- ensure leaders, managers and the governing body monitor all aspects of the school's provision rigorously in order to produce accurate self-evaluation and sharply focused improvement planning – satisfactory

External support

The local authority continues to provide valuable and necessary challenge and support to the school, with the School Improvement Partner particularly influential in providing practical advice and guidance, and in helping the school to gauge the progress it is making in tackling the key issues. In addition, the local authority has brokered the continued partnership with the acting headteacher's school and led an audit of Early Years Foundation Stage provision.