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26 November 2010

Mrs Amanda Anders
Headteacher
Roscoe Primary School
Alison Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L13 9AD

Dear Mrs Anders

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Roscoe Primary School

Following my visit with Jennifer Platt, additional inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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 – 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 Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Additional inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards and achievement in all subjects, particularly mathematics and writing.
- Ensure that all teaching is at least satisfactory or better and, in particular, provides work that meets pupils' needs and informs pupils how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum to take account of pupils' prior learning, engage their interests and raise their aspirations.
- Increase the effectiveness of the monitoring systems to improve teaching and learning and take swift action to tackle underperformance.
- Ensure there is a common sense of purpose among all senior leaders and staff to promote school improvement.
- Ensure that statutory requirements with regard to equality of opportunity and community cohesion are fully met.

Special measures: monitoring of Roscoe Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, which included an extended focus on the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They scrutinised documents and had discussions with the headteacher, school staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection six teachers and two teaching assistants have left the school as a result of the staff reduction process. One teacher has been appointed on a temporary contract until the end of the summer term 2011. The substantive Assistant Headteacher for Curriculum and Assessment took up his post on 1st September 2010. The staffing reduction process has necessitated some significant reorganisation of staff, resulting in a number of teachers changing year groups and key stages at the start of this academic year.

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

The school's most recent, unvalidated, end of Key Stage 2 test results for 2010 show significant improvement on the low standards attained in 2009. The 2010 results were in line with the national average in English and mathematics, with notable improvements at both the expected and higher levels in English. In mathematics the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level was similar to 2009, but this year significantly more pupils attained the expected level. Although the statutory assessments of Year 2 pupils showed a dip in reading standards, there were improvements in both writing and mathematics, resulting in attainment in these aspects being in line with the national average. This improved performance reflects the continuing hard work and effectiveness of the school's leaders and staff to raise standards, improve achievement and prepare pupils better for the next stage of their education.

Lessons, pupils' work and school data show that, throughout the school, pupils' progress continues to improve. However, the legacy of underachievement is still evident and, in many year groups, pupils' attainment remains below age-related expectations. The school is working hard to increase the amount of good learning and progress in all year groups so that lost ground is made up. To this end, pupils' attainment is regularly assessed and their progress carefully tracked, resulting in school data providing an increasingly clear picture of where intervention is needed to boost progress. The school's monitoring of Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils' learning and

progress, via lesson observations, scrutiny of their work and regular assessments remains intensive and effective.

The attainment of children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage remains low. The extent of children's progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and, separately, within Nursery and Reception is unclear. This is because the systems currently being used to assess children and track their progress are not sufficiently effective.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, it is clear that pupils' enjoyment of learning and belief in their ability to succeed is improving. In writing, they are learning and applying strategies that enable them to produce texts of increasing length and which reflect the individual characteristics of the genre; for example, stories, recounts, instructions and newspaper articles. They learn best when motivated, as exemplified in a Year 2 literacy lesson where pupils were captivated by the teacher going into role as Goldilocks. Encouraged to do the same they were able to produce a range of descriptive vocabulary by visualising what they saw in each room of the three bears' cottage.

Progress in science is continuing to develop well. Pupils speak enthusiastically about practical science work, and their books and classroom displays show that this is a key feature of lessons. During the monitoring inspection Year 4 pupils thoroughly enjoyed investigating how some solids change state when heated. This work enabled them to make excellent progress in developing a clearer understanding of the concepts of hypothesising, fair testing, measuring and comparing results, and recording their observations in a scientific way. Skills in information and communication technology are showing improvement as a result of increased opportunities for its use across a range of subjects.

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

- raise standards and achievement in all subjects, particularly mathematics and writing – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to behave well and their attitudes to school and enjoyment of learning are increasingly evident. Lessons are rarely interrupted by misbehaviour. Pupils appreciate the clear boundaries and expectations set by the school to enable them to work and play together harmoniously. They are increasingly willing to work cooperatively, help each other and celebrate their friends' successes. Work is presented well and reflects pupils' growing pride in their achievements.

The effectiveness of provision

Overall, the quality of teaching remains similar to that seen at the last monitoring inspection. Although outstanding and good teaching was seen on this inspection, the majority was satisfactory. This does not signal a setback in the process of improving this key aspect of provision. Rather it reflects an adjustment, as teachers in new year groups and key stages become completely familiar with the curriculum for the age group and the best methods to promote the most effective learning, having regard for pupils' level of intellectual and emotional development.

Teachers are becoming more adept at using assessment to identify pupils' needs accurately. As a result work is regularly planned at four levels of differentiation so that pupils are increasingly challenged and supported to achieve their potential. Good and outstanding lessons incorporate, as standard, brisk pace, strong teacher subject knowledge, effective questioning and providing pupils with a good balance of listening, discussing, researching, investigating and recording. The very best lessons also have that extra element that captures pupils' interest and takes learning to the next level. This was seen in a Year 6 'topic' lesson 'Dig for Victory', in which pupils' learning about this Second World War propaganda campaign was expertly linked to developing their knowledge and use of geography, visual imagery and emotive language, with further inspiration provided as pupils listened to music from the period while they worked.

Good-quality marking of pupils' work is becoming much more consistent. Directions about how to improve are precise and provided for all work. Together with the personalised English and mathematics targets linked to National Curriculum levels, this ensures that pupils are receiving a much better insight to their learning and how they can progress. 'Working walls' in classrooms continue to be used effectively by most teachers to support pupils' learning.

The improvements to the impact of teaching assistants have been maintained but some inconsistencies remain, particularly in relation to the quality of questioning compared to that of teachers. Some teaching assistants need more explicit guidance and direction in this aspect of their role.

The new assistant headteacher is leading the staff in a curriculum review. The staff have shown keenness to embrace the vision of a curriculum in which key skills, for instance in information and communication technology, are identified and continuously developed and embedded in all subjects, and work is planned and taught in ways that excite and stimulate pupils' desire to learn. The curriculum for science is going from strength to strength. Practical and field work, including that which occurs in the school's own 'Wild Wood', is making learning more meaningful. An example was the beach visit by Year 3 pupils, after which they spoke knowledgeably about the properties of sedimentary and igneous rocks.

There has been some significant reorganisation of the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Currently, however, it is not as effective as it should be. Planning to show that children will receive the expected range and balance of learning experiences in all of areas of learning is not in place. The result is first, a lack of clarity about exactly what children will learn in the long and short term. Second, the rich learning potential of activities organised by adults or initiated by the children are not being capitalised upon sufficiently to promote good learning and progress. Planned and spontaneous checks on children's attainment and progress occur but the information is not yet used effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning or accurately reflect their rates of progress in the different areas of learning. Adults have very good relationships with the children, which help them feel safe and develop good attitudes to school. Staff provide some interesting activities and resources, which the children readily engage in, but their interactions with children do not consistently extend their learning or encourage them to find out more. There has been some reorganisation of the learning environment but more thought needs to be given to the use of resources, for example, for role play areas, outdoor learning and the organisation of continuous provision to promote better learning. Some resources, such as the carpeted areas on which the children sit are in urgent need of replacement.

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

- ensure that teaching is at least satisfactory or better and, in particular, provides work that meets pupils' needs and informs pupils how to improve their work – satisfactory
- improve the quality of the curriculum to take account of pupils' prior learning, engage their interests and raise their aspirations – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's leadership, including governors, remain focused on securing improvement. They are working strategically and, for the most part, with a good degree of success to this end. However, recent weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage have not been recognised. With this exception, improvement planning is thorough and detailed, with clear and appropriate priorities and action identified. Systems to analyse data are becoming more sophisticated and useful in enabling the school to direct intervention and to analyse and compare the attainment and progress of specific groups of pupils.

The last monitoring inspection identified that the school needed to focus particularly on moving solidly satisfactory teaching to good. This has been acted upon, but the focus has needed to be less intense than originally envisaged. This is because the school has had to accommodate full-scale monitoring of all teachers to ensure that the reorganised staffing structure was working effectively. Consequently, the impact of the drive to achieve more consistently good teaching is not yet sufficiently embedded. However, action to address this issue is underway and being adjusted in

the light of regular monitoring to ensure that staff receive the right amount and type of coaching and support.

The school's recent monitoring of the Early Years Foundation Stage has not matched its previously astute and accurate evaluations of the rest of the school. Views of the quality and effectiveness of this provision are too positive and not based securely enough on a thorough understanding of what provision for children in this phase should encompass and look like.

The new assistant headteacher has merged seamlessly into the senior management structure and adds to the strong role model for teaching provided by other senior managers and core curriculum leaders. Previous staffing conflicts have abated and there is now a much more tangible sense of purpose and direction among the staff. The governors continue to be significantly involved in the school's development, checking and challenging its work and outcomes in a highly constructive way.

The area for improvement related to ensuring statutory requirements with regard to equality of opportunity and community cohesion was fully resolved at the last monitoring inspection.

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

- increase the effectiveness of the monitoring systems to improve teaching and learning and take swift action to tackle underperformance – satisfactory
- ensure there is a common sense of purpose among all senior leaders and staff to promote school improvement – good

External support

The new School Improvement Partner is providing a good level of support and challenge for the school. A recent local authority review provided the school with accurate and effective feedback on the progress made against the areas for improvement. In the main, the local authority's review findings concur with those of the monitoring inspection, including recommendations to improve aspects of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the significance of the local authority's recommendations, in terms of how they have an impact on the quality of provision and the learning outcomes for the children, was not made clear enough to the school and, in part, underpinned the school's view that provision in this phase was better than it is.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.