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20 May 2011

Mr T Richards
Headteacher
Thornbury Primary School
Dick Lane
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD3 7AU

Dear Mr Richards,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Thornbury Primary School

Following my visit with Mrs Sarah Drake, additional inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 May 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 on 13 and 14 July 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 – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications: in the Early Years Foundation Stage only.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 13 and 14 July 2010

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, and in all subjects, by:
 - ensuring that all teaching promotes consistently good learning
 - making lessons more challenging, particularly for pupils of middle and high ability
 - ensuring that all teachers use the assessment of pupils' attainment to plan lessons more effectively
 - providing better guidance for pupils on how they can improve their work.

- Improve the effectiveness of senior leaders, by:
 - ensuring that monitoring and evaluation systems accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for development and lead to effective strategies to tackle weaknesses
 - developing more robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

- Enable middle managers to be more effective in tackling underachievement, by:
 - ensuring that they have an accurate picture of the school's performance
 - providing them with further training to develop their leadership and management skills
 - giving them more opportunities to monitor teaching and learning and to tackle weaknesses, by holding other staff to account.

- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to account more fully for the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Thornbury Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection from 18 to 19 May 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been significant levels of staff absence. The headteacher has resigned from his post. Considerable disruption to the senior leadership function has occurred. Many temporary supply staff have been engaged and frequent changes made to this provision day by day. A reduction has been made to the number of posts at middle leadership level. The school was led for the second half of the spring term by a part-time temporary associate headteacher. On 1 May 2011, the associate headteacher was appointed full time to lead the school temporarily until at least 31 December 2011 in an executive headteacher capacity.

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

Overall, work in pupils' books, school monitoring data and observations in lessons show pupils making improved progress. Monitoring reports by the local authority agree that the rate of pupils' progress is getting better. There is variation in this improvement across year groups and classes. Also, pupils' progress in mathematics is less strong than in reading and writing. In Year 6, pupils are on track to exceed the targets set for their end-of-year attainment in English but are below expectations in mathematics. Taken together, school data show Year 6 pupils to be achieving broadly in line with the school's expectations. Data for other year groups show a mixed picture but one which demonstrates some improvement. Pupils identified by the school as needing extra support, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making improved gains in their learning as a result of effective interventions and guidance.

A great deal of this improvement has occurred in recent weeks. Much time was lost in the period immediately following the last monitoring inspection. Consequently, whilst the rate of progress being made by pupils has improved, the amount of learning gained during the whole period is insufficient. It is not enough to enable pupils to begin to make up for the significant underachievement in the school in past years. Inspection evidence shows that the rate of improvement is quickly accelerating this term as the stability of staffing improves and the impact of stronger leadership on the quality of teaching gains momentum. This improvement is too recent to compensate effectively for poor progress in the spring term.

There remains much to do to sustain improvement and enable pupils to close the gap and reach the standards of which they are capable, but a sound start has been made recently.

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

- raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, and in all subjects – inadequate.

The effectiveness of provision

In observations made during the inspection, the proportion of inadequate, satisfactory or good lessons was largely unchanged since the last monitoring inspection. The outcome of monitoring by the local authority and school leaders strongly concurs with this. Much of the leaders' efforts to improve the provision are at a very early stage of implementation. The impact of the turbulent period of staff absence and leadership instability has significantly hindered the pace of improvement. However, there are several encouraging signs of emerging improvement, albeit embryonic, with a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

Of particular note is the significantly improved emphasis on pupils' learning. Leaders have successfully sharpened the focus of the school's work so that learning is at the heart of everything the school aims to improve. For example, in lessons, teachers frequently refer to the learning intentions and ask the pupils, 'what have we learned so far?' This ongoing checking by teachers is beginning to increase the rate at which pupils learn. This is a recent development but a sound start has been made in this aspect. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were confident that lessons are improving. Teachers' planning has also been a focus for improvement and here too there is clear evidence that it is getting better. Plans are clearer, more focused on learning, and have sharply defined success criteria which enable the teachers to target activities that are mostly well-matched to pupils' needs.

The biggest issue for the school to address, in improving its provision, is consistency. There is too much variation between classes. For example, in the best lessons seen, teachers and teaching assistants work as a team to deliver and present the tasks for pupils. In one lesson, as the teacher held the interest of the pupils in a rapid question and answer session, the assistant recorded the pupils' ideas on the whiteboard and periodically added her own ideas and questions into the mix. This helps to maintain a brisk pace to the learning and pupils show obvious enjoyment and interest. However, in too many lessons teaching assistants play an insufficient part in the main delivery of learning to the whole class. The support and guidance given to individual pupils or small groups by teaching assistants is effective, but more could be gained by fully utilising their skills throughout each lesson. Other areas of inconsistency in the school's provision include the organisation of classrooms, and the lack of opportunities taken to model learning for pupils. Also, there remains a significant difference in the expectations of teachers for how quickly pupils can learn a skill or piece of knowledge. Leaders' attempts to improve the use of ongoing assessment are beginning to rectify this, but there is a lot more to be done before expectations are consistently high enough.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

This is the most notable area of improvement since the last monitoring inspection. In particular, the impact of the executive headteacher has been to increase significantly the pace of improvement. Parents and pupils who spoke to inspectors were unanimous in their praise for the improved communication and approachability of school leaders. Decisive action has been taken to clarify leaders' roles and responsibilities. The structures and systems in the school have been clarified, strengthened and made more efficient. For example, the data tracking system is now more accessible and serviceable for leaders and staff. As a result, targets for pupils' attainment and progress are sharper and more challenging. The senior team is now providing clearer direction for improvement and there is a shared sense of ownership for plans for improvement. The impact of the senior leaders actions are at an early stage but a satisfactory start has been made and the momentum of improvement is increasing sharply.

The role of middle leaders is in the process of review and new job descriptions are emerging. An improved rigour is evident to monitoring and this is seen in better procedures for strengthening pupils' progress. A great deal of this development is embryonic and it is too soon to show sufficient impact on tackling pupils' underachievement. Staff are very receptive to the actions of senior leaders designed to develop and improve middle leadership.

The IEB is successfully tackling the difficult and challenging issues associated with high staff absence and underperformance. Increasingly, the IEB is able to hold senior leaders to account as the improved communication and working practices of the senior team make for better analysis and evaluations of the school's performance. Minutes of the many meetings of the IEB and its working groups, show improving governance which is focused on improving the school's provision.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of senior leaders - satisfactory
- enable middle managers to be more effective in tackling underachievement- inadequate
- ensure that the governing body holds the school to account more fully for the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has increased its good support for the school. It provides a number of consultants and a School Improvement Partner. Reports from local authority monitoring are rigorous and evaluative, giving the IEB and school leaders an accurate view of the school's performance. Communication between the local authority, the IEB and school leaders is much improved. There is good challenge and shared thinking between each of these groups.