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Mrs M Hill
Marlpool Junior School
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Dear Mrs Hill

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Marlpool Junior School

Following my visit to your school with Paul Brooker HMI and David Westall, additional inspector, on 8 and 9 June 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 February 2011. 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.

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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Eradicate underachievement in all year groups and improve the profile of teaching and learning so that the large majority is good or better by ensuring that:
 - all inadequate teaching is eradicated as a matter of urgency
 - assessment information is used to plan work to meet the needs of all pupils and challenges pupils of all abilities
 - all teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn in lessons and carefully guide pupils through the small steps which help them to learn effectively
 - regular feedback on how to improve their work is given to pupils in lessons and through marking
 - the work given to pupils motivates them to learn and teachers do not talk for too long
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - the curriculum builds systematically on pupils' prior knowledge and skills and curriculum planning gives teachers helpful guidance on how match pupils' work to their capabilities.

- Strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement by:
 - using assessment information more rigorously to monitor the progress made by different groups of pupils, evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives on raising pupils' achievement and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - ensuring that lessons observations and monitoring work in pupils' books are carried out regularly, systematically and rigorously, and leaders give teachers clear guidance on how to improve pupils' learning
 - ensuring that the governing body is provided with accurate information so that it can hold the school to account effectively.

Special measures: monitoring of Marlpool Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 June 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, groups of teachers and teaching assistants and the mentor headteacher.

Context

Since the last inspection, four teachers are on long-term absence and, of these, three have resigned. Long-term supply cover has been secured. A temporary assistant headteacher has been appointed from the existing staff. One new teacher has been appointed and an assistant headteacher is being seconded to the school. Both are due to take up these posts in September. At the time of the inspection, four of the eight classes visited were taught by temporary staff.

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

Recently established assessment and tracking systems show some improvement in pupils' attainment and progress. In Year 6, most pupils have made expected progress in reading and writing from Key Stage 1 but progress in mathematics is less positive. As a result of considerable turbulence in staffing, progress is inconsistent and, in some years, particularly Year 3, progress remains a concern. Monitoring has also revealed inconsistency in the rates of progress of different groups of pupils across different subjects. Nevertheless, progress in lessons is improving and lessons are generally calm and purposeful. However, the rates of progress and quality of learning vary too widely from lesson to lesson. In the most effective lessons, pupils benefit from well-planned practical activities that engage their interest and enthusiasm, but there are still too many lessons in which the teacher talks for too long and pupils become distracted.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- eradicate underachievement in all year groups and improve the profile of teaching and learning so that the large majority is good or better – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

In most lessons, pupils not only behave well but also show enthusiasm for their work. They enjoy collaborating in pairs and small groups, and only gentle prompting

is needed to maintain good order. However, in a small minority of lessons, time is wasted through inattentive behaviour and excessive off-task chatter. This is most evident when teaching lacks pace and focus, at times linked with too much teacher talk.

Attendance continues to be in line with national averages, overall. However an increasing number of pupils are taking holidays during term time. The school are aware of the need to promote attendance more vigorously.

The effectiveness of provision

There has been a considerable change to staffing and, at the time of the inspection visit, four teachers had started teaching their classes that day or the day before. It is too soon to judge the impact of these teachers on the overall quality of teaching. However, the school has been successful in addressing the most significant weaknesses in teaching. Specific strategies have been developed to strengthen teaching and achieve greater consistency. For example, teachers consistently use learning objectives and success criteria at the start of lessons so that pupils know exactly what they are learning and what they can expect to achieve. Pupils have greeted this strategy with enthusiasm. Although some weaknesses remain, the lessons observed by inspectors were satisfactory or better.

Where learning is most rapid for all groups, learning outcomes are sharply focused and suitably challenging, and learning activities are tailored to meet individual needs. For example, in a good mathematics lesson, Year 6 pupils made good progress in applying calculation skills to the practical problem of working out the cost of a family holiday. Pupils of different abilities were supported through the teacher's skilful questioning. However, this good practice is not consistent and some teachers spend too long explaining work. Teachers routinely identify, in their planning, groups and individual pupils who need extra support or challenge. However, specific activities to meet these needs are not always provided. As a result, in some lessons, the most able are insufficiently challenged and the least able struggle with work that is too difficult.

Suitable steps have been taken to strengthen the use of assessment. Marking is completed regularly but it has not had sufficient impact, either because it does not pinpoint key areas for improvement or because they are not properly followed up. Some pupils are aware of their targets but this is inconsistent, and few are clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Teachers have recently implemented a new marking policy but it is too soon to see the impact of this in improving pupils' progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has shown considerable resolve and calmness in tackling the most significant weaknesses in teaching. Subject leadership in English is developing well

and there are suitable plans to accelerate pupils' literacy skills. A thorough programme of lesson observations and work scrutiny is being developed. This has enabled the school to adopt strategies to improve teaching, such as teachers consistently using learning walls to give pupils visual reminders of the key points of their learning. Responsibility for steering the school's recovery has been largely assumed by the local authority but the headteacher has implemented changes well. The school improvement plan provides a satisfactory agenda for the school and sets out a sensible range of actions to guide its development. However, the criteria for measuring the success of these actions lack precision.

The headteacher, with support from the local authority, has steered the school through a turbulent term and teachers are positive about the future. Teachers are keen to improve their practice and they work well with external consultants.

The governing body has responded positively to the challenges facing the school and it is developing suitable systems to help it to check on the quality of the school's work. The quality of the information offered by the school is adequate and improving as a consequence of increasingly focused work by members of the governing body.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action provides a good programme of support for the school, including guidance for leaders and the governing body. Guidance from the lead adviser, mentor headteacher and consultants from the local authority has been effectively prioritised and well coordinated. The actions taken to strengthen leadership and teaching have been welcomed by the school and have had a positive impact on the school's provision.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the impact of assessment, particularly through routine marking and the use of pupil progress data and individual targets, to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Increase the proportion of lessons that are good or better by ensuring that all pupils are actively engaged and suitably challenged.