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23 June 2011

Mrs J Rouse
Headteacher
Marshland Primary School
Marshland Road
Moorends
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN8 4SB

Dear Mrs Rouse,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Marshland Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 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 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

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 Doncaster.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Cox
Additional Inspector

January 2011



Annex

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics and ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across the school by:
 - ensuring the quality of teaching is consistently good or better
 - giving pupils clear guidance through teachers' marking about the steps they need to take to improve their work
 - providing more carefully targeted work that better matches the needs of individual pupils.

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - ensuring it fully meets pupils' needs
 - promoting basic skills in increasingly practical ways to engage pupils, boys in particular, more readily in their learning
 - improving the links between subjects and so make learning experiences more interesting and enjoyable for all groups of pupils.

- Develop the effectiveness of all leaders and managers by:
 - sharpening evaluation so that it highlights priorities and sets a clear direction for improvement throughout the school
 - improving the accuracy and recording of tracking, monitoring and assessment information and use this effectively to plan pupils' future learning
 - ensuring that the governing body holds the school rigorously to account for its performance in order to bring about sustained improvement
 - ensuring that the governing body is fully involved in setting the strategic direction of the school
 - ensuring that the governing body accurately monitors the effectiveness of its own work.

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - presenting attendance issues in a more engaging way to parents and carers so they appreciate better the importance of regular attendance
 - provide clear practical guidance to parents and carers to help them improve their child's attendance
 - increasing the range of rewards available to pupils who improve their attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of Marshland Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 June 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including four part lessons, as well as some shorter visits to lessons, scrutinised documents and met with two pupils from each key stage, the headteacher and other key staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the associate headteacher who is a Local Leader of Education.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2010, a local authority governor has been appointed to the governing body. Two non-teaching members of staff have left the school. The services of the associate headteacher, a practicing headteacher from a nearby outstanding school secured before the last inspection, continue.

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

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 was low and lower than the school's leaders expected. School data for the current Year 6 suggest an increase in overall attainment, with greater success in mathematics than in English. Nevertheless, despite the anticipated improvements, attainment is likely to remain lower than that expected when compared to both the national average and the pupils' starting points. Teacher assessments are signalling low attainment at the end of Year 2 also. Weaknesses in writing are restricting overall achievement across both key stages.

The quality of teaching and its impact on learning has improved. The introduction of approaches that enable pupils to be more actively involved in their learning is promoting more engagement and enjoyment. Pupils talk excitedly of these improvements. For example, in the mixed-age Year 3 and 4 class, pupils understand and appreciate the different techniques needed in physical education when throwing a ball a great distance and enjoy the competition when measuring the distance of each throw using basic mathematics. Pupils enjoy the starter activities in some lessons when they are shown an image and asked to write imaginatively about it and then read their work aloud to the class.

More attention is paid to meeting the full range of pupils' abilities in lessons. However, strategies to promote this are underdeveloped, and much of what is taught is of a 'one size fits all' style. This restricts the progress of higher and lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

A new marking policy has been introduced recently and is understood by most pupils. However, it is too early for it to have had full impact, and pupils are not always clear about the next steps they need to take in their learning. They also lack a secure understanding of their National Curriculum targets and their progress towards them.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise attainment in English and mathematics and ensure pupils make consistently good progress across the school – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils speak well of the increased rewards to acknowledge higher levels of attendance. Giving pencils, pencil cases and other appropriate equipment to pupils with full attendance is a successful initiative to drive the message home to parents and carers of the importance of regular and sustained attendance. The school has sent home pupils' attendance records and has written to parents and carers offering clear and practical guidance to encourage them to ensure that their children attend regularly. Bright displays in the school foyer, targeted specifically at parents and carers, reinforce the importance and benefits of coming to school. As a result of these actions, attendance is improving.

Pupils talk confidently about the improvements within the school. Behaviour is said to be better because more teachers are on duty at appropriate times of the day and a consistent approach is applied in lessons when dealing with low level disruptions. One pupil spoke of the school having 'put its foot down' to improve behaviour and attendance and that the school is now a 'settled and more enjoyable place to be'.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve pupils' attendance - satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

Teachers make learning objectives clear to pupils at the start of lessons and often revisit them throughout to assess pupils' understanding. Intended learning is broken down further into 'steps to success' and shared with pupils to help meet the overall objective. However, some older pupils spoke of wanting to be set work that further challenged them. The school is taking a more coherent view of the curriculum and is now planning for the longer term. It has adopted a creative, topic-based approach, which is increasingly making links between different subjects in order to make learning more relevant. Better use is being made of the school environment as a resource, with, for example, more learning taking place outdoors. The changes are proving to be popular with pupils. Action is also being taken to make the mathematics and English curriculum more interesting. For example, in the Year 5 and 6 class, using the game 'Battleships' as a vehicle to teach the concept of plotting coordinates resulted in all pupils, but particularly boys, being more engaged with their learning. The curriculum is not resulting in activities yet being pitched at the right level of challenge for all, and opportunities to make more cross-curricular links are still missed.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve the curriculum - satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, the school has drawn up well-focused and detailed plans to address the areas for improvement. These plans set a clear direction for change that everyone in the school understands. Actions and their impact are evaluated regularly. Systems to track individual pupils' progress are accurate and targets set are appropriately challenging. Senior leaders use this data to secure an accurate overall view. However, not all teachers use the data sufficiently well enough to inform lesson planning to help secure improved achievement for all. The governing body has been strengthened by a local authority appointed governor, who has a wide experience of education and of schools in difficult circumstances. Training for the governing body, undertaken since the last inspection, has helped the members understand their responsibilities more fully and has focused on the correct priorities. The governing body is now setting about its responsibilities with a renewed sense of purpose and is increasingly confident in asking challenging questions of the school and in being more proactive in driving improvements. A strategic planning group has been set up to specifically and regularly monitor the school's progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- develop the effectiveness of all leaders and managers - satisfactory

External support

The action plan written by the local authority meets requirements and has helped the school develop its own detailed plans for improvement. Before the last inspection, the local authority had contributed to the commissioning of the associate headteacher to help support the school. This partnership is very strong and is helping to provide, in consultation with the senior leaders and other staff, the necessary direction to take in order to improve. A real sense of collaboration and support exists between the associate headteacher, her school and Marshland. The local authority is committed to this external support continuing for as long as necessary.