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7 July 2011

Mrs C Bell
Headteacher
Riverview Primary School
Suffolk Road
Burton-on-Trent
DE15 9HR

Dear Mrs Bell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Riverview Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 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 Staffordshire and the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the progress made by pupils and raise attainment to at least the national average by July 2012 by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - set work that is appropriately matched to pupils' abilities
 - move learning on at a brisk pace.

- Improve pupils' enjoyment of, and behaviour in, lessons by:
 - providing a curriculum that is more closely matched to their interests
 - setting tasks in stimulating and engaging contexts
 - providing pupils with greater opportunities to use and apply their basic skills in a range of subjects.

- Increase the rate at which the school improves by ensuring that leaders and managers, including the governing body, take swift and decisive action to deal with weaknesses as soon as they are identified through accurate and robust monitoring of teaching and learning.

- Improve attendance to at least 94% by July 2011 by raising the criterion for intervention to 90%.

Special measures: monitoring of Riverview Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5 July 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, three representatives of the local authority, and groups of pupils. They observed 17 lessons taught by 10 different teachers.

Context

There have been no substantial changes in the school's context since the previous inspection.

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

The achievement of pupils is inadequate, but their enjoyment of learning has improved. Progress in most lessons seen was satisfactory, including that for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but the low attainment identified in February has not yet had time to show significant improvement. Preliminary 2011 Key Stage 2 test results are broadly similar to 2010. School leaders have identified shortfalls in attainment writing in Year 6, although reading has improved. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains good and is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 1. The school's tracking of pupils' progress shows continuing weakness in Years 3 and 4 overall, with great variability between different classes. There is some recovery of progress evident in Years 5 and 6.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve the progress made by pupils and raise attainment to at least the national average by July 2012 – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

In conversations with pupils, all say they enjoy school. In most lessons, pupils are busy learning and practising new skills for the majority of the time. They cooperate well together, are keen to learn and want to do well for their teachers. Younger children enjoy writing, although older ones are less keen. Pupils of all ages are pleased to show how well they can read, and enjoy the regular reading sessions every day. They behave well in almost all lessons, and show reasonable patience whilst waiting to get started, even during the examples of inadequate teaching seen at this visit. A lot of good work has been done to encourage better attendance, using local authority welfare officers, immediate follow-up to parents by telephone or text for any absence, and persistent encouragement and reminders for parents to get them to bring their children to school. Attendance improves as pupils get older, and

the overall figure for the spring of 2011 was 94%, a substantial improvement on last year.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve pupils' enjoyment of, and behaviour in, lessons – satisfactory
- Improve attendance – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

On this visit, inspectors observed 17 lessons, three of which were inadequate. Two teachers were not observed during this visit. This is a better profile than at the previous inspection. A common strength of most lessons now is the range of tasks available to pupils that match their abilities. Most lessons have interesting enough content, and most teachers are, at least initially, capturing the imagination of pupils. Opportunities for problem-solving, creative writing, reading, and independent learning are there in every lesson, but are not being maximised in about half of them. However, the other half of lessons are at least good, having a range of activities, resources and approaches available to pupils, who in turn have some opportunity to choose the pitch of difficulty themselves. Very little time is wasted in whole class direction; within a few minutes of the start of the lesson, pupils are stuck into the main task. In these better lessons, teachers ensure each pupil contributes to any whole-class discussion, through using mini-white boards, or quick-fire discussion in pairs, or bouncing the first answer received from a pupil back to other pupils for them to discuss. Teachers use the information they gather from these activities to adjust their subsequent lesson plan; in one good example, this led to re-teaching pupils about prime numbers, as the starter task revealed some gaps in their understanding. Sometimes, however, teachers unnecessarily end a lesson too soon, by trying to gather pupils together on a carpet in order to ask a few of them a question to check understanding. This leads to time being wasted in moving around, sitting in the right place, or aimless chatter and becomes a 'crowd control' issue. In most of the lessons, teachers already know how well individual pupils have mastered the learning, on an individual basis, because they circulate throughout the class checking each pupil's progress. Where learning is weaker, teachers interrupt the pupils too often, stopping the flow of their activity. They spend so long explaining the task that there is nothing much left for the pupils to do for themselves and, for those lessons, teachers are not holding high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- providing a curriculum that is more closely matched to their interests – satisfactory
- setting tasks in stimulating and engaging contexts – satisfactory
- providing pupils with greater opportunities to use and apply their basic skills in a range of subjects – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school, with the support of the local authority, has begun the formal capability processes to resolve weak teaching that they have identified as a result of robust monitoring and observation of teaching and learning. The local authority has trained governors in strategies to monitor and evaluate the school, which have been well-received and taken seriously by the governing body. Other senior staff have worked alongside local authority consultants to monitor and support teachers, so that there is a widely shared and accurate understanding of the key strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the school, even by its own records, has not met the local authority's action plan target of eliminating inadequate teaching by July 2011; it must expedite the work it has begun to improve teaching quality.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Increase the rate at which the school improves by ensuring that leaders and managers, including the governing body, take swift and decisive action to deal with weaknesses as soon as they are identified through accurate and robust monitoring of teaching and learning – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has provided an adequate range of different support for the school. This includes working with governors to help them understand what is required in terms of holding the school to account, supporting school leaders through the procedures involved in tackling weak teaching, and consultant support for teachers to help them improve. These activities have not yet had sufficient time to make an impact on raising the attainment of pupils. At this stage, there is nothing further necessary to add to the support package outlined in the formal statement of action, which meets the requirements set by Ofsted. The local authority has arranged for an informal partnership with another local primary school, which is intended to provide opportunities for staff to work with colleagues from a different setting, giving them experience of alternative strategies in their teaching, leadership and management.