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7 October 2011

Mrs M Hill
Headteacher
Marlpool Junior School
Claramount Road
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Dear Mrs Hill

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Marlpool Junior School

Following my visit with Paul Brooker HMI to your school on 5 and 6 October 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 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 is satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection is satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 the 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 second monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 October 2011

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last visit, two new members of staff have taken up post, each with leadership responsibilities: one permanent appointment and one long-term secondment. At the time of the inspection, one of the classes was being taught by long-term temporary staff.

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

Progress in lessons is more consistent and is showing some signs of acceleration. However, the school's analysis of progress for different groups over the last academic year, shows that whilst it is good in some year groups, it remains variable. Pupils are not making the more rapid progress required to make up for gaps in their learning caused by previous underachievement in both English and mathematics. Progress in Year 6 last year was below expectations, particularly in English. Writing remains an area of concern across the school. Pupils in Year 3 have made a good start, expectations are high and they have settled into good working routines.

In the lessons observed, progress was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In the most effective lessons, pupils were beginning to demonstrate independence in carrying out investigations and problem solving.

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

- 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

Attendance dipped last year. The school is taking sensible steps to reward good attendance and challenge absence when necessary. The school monitors patterns in pupils' attendance, but analysis and application of this information is not sufficiently rigorous. The school has worked hard to reassert its high expectations of pupils' behaviour and tighten procedures for monitoring attendance. Pupils have responded

well to the new 'behaviour ladders' in each classroom and they are keen to demonstrate thoughtful behaviour. Pupils arrive to lessons ready to work and with positive attitudes to learning. Whenever given the opportunity, they work well together in pairs and groups, and gain confidence in sharing their ideas and work with others. However, many pupils lack the assurance to articulate more than one or two word responses. Pupils respond to the lure of rewards and are motivated to attend well and behave sensibly so that they can look forward to their 'Fabulous Fridays'.

The effectiveness of provision

The profile of teaching has been strengthened by new appointments. Inadequate teaching has been successfully eradicated and the quality of teaching is improving steadily. The school's monitoring indicates that the proportion of good and, occasionally, outstanding lessons is increasing. The positive relationships between adults and children ensure that pupils settle quickly and are keen to do well. Lesson activities are better planned so that, in general, pupils now spend less time listening to teachers. Some units of work, for example 'The market place' in Years 5 and 6, are specifically designed to engage pupils' interest and active participation.

Teachers have worked hard to improve the learning environment. Classrooms are bright and welcoming places, with good displays of work. Teachers are making increasingly good use of the 'working walls', established last term, to promote learning. In lessons, teachers routinely share what they want pupils to learn so that their learning is purposeful and lessons can proceed at a good pace. Learning outcomes are also shared so that pupils understand what they should achieve and what progress they are making. In the most effective lessons, these outcomes are ambitious for different groups, are routinely referred to during the lesson, and are used by the pupils themselves to assess what they might do to improve their work. For example, in a good Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils were making good progress in checking their descriptions of Sweden; they understood from the shared learning outcomes how they should use sight and feelings as well as checking that they used capital letters and full stops correctly.

Teachers plan carefully what pupils will learn, but activities do not always promote consistently rapid learning. Where this is so, it is because work does not present a suitable level of challenge or because independent activities do not enable pupils to develop their understanding. In the best lessons, pupils were actively involved in their learning and enjoyed investigating, hypothesising or asking questions for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are often supported effectively when teachers plan carefully with teaching assistants to ensure their needs are met. However, this too is not consistent.

The new assessment and tracking systems are still in the early stages of implementation, but significant progress has been made in strengthening the

accuracy and impact of routine assessment. Staff have agreed a common approach to marking, which is already showing positive impact on pupils' learning, particularly when the pupils respond to the guidance given. There is emerging best practice where teachers assess progress against learning outcomes and individual targets.

The school has introduced skill-based topic work in the foundation subjects to embed skills in literacy across the curriculum. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this on pupils' learning and progress. Part of this approach includes teachers now teaching their own class for literacy and foundation subjects. This helps them to develop a detailed understanding of pupils' individual needs.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to steer the school's recovery with quiet determination. Although the school still relies on external support and guidance, self-evaluation, based on systematic monitoring, is increasingly confident and rigorous. Lesson observations make accurate assessments of the quality of teaching and helpfully guide improvement. Scrutinies of pupils' work have been a useful source of information to leaders in evaluating the impact of new assessment procedures. Information gathered is suitably evaluated and informs development planning. However, analysis sometimes lacks rigour and tends to be in response to issues.

The new senior leadership team supports the headteacher well and is developing the capacity to drive forward improvement. Although in its early stages, this newly formed group has reviewed important policies for teaching and learning and introduced new systems for assessment and tracking. These strategies are focused primarily on English and mathematics, and the school are aware of the need to use them more effectively across the whole curriculum. Teachers meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss the progress of individual pupils in their class. This helps teachers to identify where there is underachievement and take increasingly effective action to address this.

The governing body continues to develop its role. Governors are increasingly well informed and better prepared to ask questions in order to hold the school to account and recognise the improvements made.

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

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

External support

The local authority continues to provide extensive and effective advice and support, including steps to secure high quality staffing and establishing systems for tracking progress. The school values the guidance provided by specialist advisers.

Priorities for further improvement

- Extend the improvements to learning by ensuring that pupils develop their independent learning skills through investigative tasks and developing their higher-order thinking skills.