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29 September 2011

Mrs N Brogan
Headteacher
Woodland Community Primary School
Regent Street
Heywood
Lancashire
OL10 3BX

Dear Mrs Brogan,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Woodland Community Primary School

Following my visit with Peter McKay, additional inspector, to your school on Tuesday 27 September 2011 and Wednesday 28 September 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 on Wednesday 30 March 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 - inadequate

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 Rochdale.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on Wednesday 30 March 2011

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress securely and rapidly by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and ensuring the quality of teaching is at least consistently good
 - making sure that teaching challenges pupils of all abilities appropriately
 - making sure that teaching has a sharp focus on its impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve behaviour so that it is at least satisfactory by making sure that teaching is consistent in stimulating pupils' interest and application.
- Improve pupils' prospects for their future success and economic well-being so that they are at least satisfactory by:
 - maintaining and embedding the recent improvements in attendance
 - improving pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Improve the effectiveness with which leaders and managers embed ambition and drive the school forward so that pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory by:
 - making sure that evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and leads to more rigorous tackling of shortcomings
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning with more rigour
 - making sure that forward planning provides the school with clear direction and a sharp concentration on priorities to bring about the rapid improvement that is necessary
 - making governance more effective in holding the school rigorously to account.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Woodland Community Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection from Tuesday 27 September 2011 to Wednesday 28 September 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons, the school's work, scrutinised a wide range of documents including those for vetting and recruiting staff and met with the headteacher, pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher resigned in August 2011 and a new, permanent, experienced headteacher took up her post in September 2011. An additional deputy headteacher has been seconded to support the school for two days each week. One permanent teacher has left.

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

Standards in English and mathematics remain very low across the school. In the 2011 national tests for eleven-year-olds, results in both subjects dropped significantly to a new low: fewer than half of pupils gained the expected Level 4 in mathematics and just over half did so in English. Half of the school's pupil population is known to be eligible for free school meals. Just over a third of boys in this group attained the expected level in the national tests. The work in pupils' exercise books and evidence from lesson observations confirm the picture painted by the test results. Large numbers of pupils are underachieving. Pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are too low.

Outcomes at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly in line with national and local expectations. Most children get off to a flying start acquiring a good grasp of letter sound knowledge to enable them to read easily and efficiently. However, the teaching of these crucial skills is not consistent across the three classes and one group of children is already developing poor habits in articulating sounds and blending them to form words. Pupils' progress diminishes significantly in Key Stage 1, mainly as a result of the inadequate teaching of reading and writing and the over repetition of mathematics content taught earlier. In Year 1, the teaching does not build on the solid foundation laid and pupils make very limited progress in their reading and acquisition of letter sound knowledge. They read too few books and write too little and too infrequently. Consequently, too many pupils enter Key Stage 2 with gaps in their mathematical knowledge and weak skills of handwriting, punctuation, spelling and grammar.

The legacy of underachievement persists throughout Key Stage 2 and the lack of whole-school systems to redress pupils' weaknesses compounds the difficulties. Some individual teachers work extremely hard to tackle the shortcomings in pupils' skills and there are

classes where pupils make good progress. The gaps in pupils' knowledge are considerable and it is not clear whether the teaching of English and mathematics covers all the elements of the National Curriculum.

At all ages, pupils read too few books and reading standards are too low. Apart from one or two exceptions, there is very little reading taking place in other subject lessons so pupils are not expected, or encouraged, to read widely. Pupils' writing skills are weak and they write too little and too infrequently, often because the teaching takes up far too much time and pupils are left with limited opportunities in which to write. The overuse of worksheets limits pupils' response, frequently to one word answers, and does not allow them to develop the skill to draw tables, use rulers and lay out their work neatly.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress securely and rapidly - inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour observed during this visit, in lessons and around the school, was good, often in the face of some uninspiring teaching. On occasions, when teaching was inadequate, a small number of pupils became restless and bored. Nevertheless, the great majority of pupils are keen to work and enthusiastic to learn. Inspectors were taken by pupils' enthusiasm for school and their eagerness to do more. Several told inspectors that the work was 'too easy' or that they had 'done it before'.

The new headteacher has imposed a new behaviour policy which has had a dramatic impact in a very short space of time. The new policy has been enthusiastically welcomed by the pupils and by most staff. The school is orderly and calm.

Overall attendance has dipped since the last inspection and is below average, although the attendance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has improved.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve behaviour so that it is at least satisfactory by making sure that teaching is consistent in stimulating pupils' interest and application – good.
- improve pupils' prospects for their future success and economic well-being so that they are at least satisfactory - inadequate.

The effectiveness of provision

Learning and progress were inadequate in over a half of the 19 lessons or part-lessons observed. Pupils spend too much time on the carpet listening to teachers talking and not enough time engaged in intellectually demanding work. More-able pupils have to sit through

repetition and review of previous work when they could be getting on with work at their level. Lessons, generally, lack challenge and too often all pupils are given the same activity to do. In some classrooms, there are three or four adults supporting pupils but they are not always deployed effectively. Occasionally, the interaction between support assistants and pupils is not as effective as it could be. For example, inspectors observed support staff telling pupils the answers to their work and giving too much direction. Teachers' use of assessment data to group pupils and match work to their stage of development is weak. New lesson planning sheets have been introduced by the headteacher to aid this process but not all members of staff have embraced the new arrangements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher hit the ground running. She has a good understanding of the school's position and what is required to bring about improvement but she faces hostility and resistance to change from a significant number of staff, including some members of the existing management team, some of whom have not sufficiently carried out their responsibilities in monitoring aspects of the school's work in the six months following the Special Measures judgement.

In the six months since the inspection, minimal progress has been made on the areas for improvement. The role of middle managers is under developed. They have not, so far, taken a leading role in moving the school forward. The leadership and management of English, especially of the teaching of reading, and of mathematics, are inadequate. There is an assumption by subject managers that National Curriculum programmes of study are being covered systematically and progressively but there is no monitoring evidence to confirm this. There is a lack of clear, whole-school schemes, either commercial or school developed, to ensure continuity and progression in both subjects and assessment systems are weak.

Governance is stronger than it was. New governors, with highly relevant knowledge and expertise, have been appointed to the governing body. They bring a stronger level of challenge to the school and, with the headteacher, make a robust strategic team able to take action and lead the school forward.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the effectiveness with which leaders and managers embed ambition and drive the school forward so that pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory – inadequate

External support

The local authority's statement of action for the school has been evaluated by School Causing Concern HMI and judged to be 'fit for purpose'. However, the impact of the support provided by the local authority and School Improvement Partner has, so far, been minimal. The school has purchased the services of an inclusion consultant to review the

administration of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This work is at an early stage and has yet to show impact.

Priorities for further improvement

As a matter of urgency

- Establish a clear baseline of pupils' attainment in reading, across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Establish a rigorous, systematic and efficient programme to teach letter-sound knowledge to all pupils in Key Stage 1 and those who need it in Key Stage 2.
- Establish a rigorous reading programme for all pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, ensuring that pupils read widely and for pleasure.
- Ensure that the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for English and mathematics are taught in the correct sequence and at the right pace.