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13 October 2011

Mr T Richards
Headteacher
Thornbury Primary School
Dick Lane
Bradford
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Dear Mr Richards

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Thornbury Primary School

Following my visit with Peter McKay, additional inspector, to your school on the 11 and 12 of 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2010. 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2010

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, and in all subjects, by:
 - ensuring that all teaching promotes consistently good learning
 - making lessons more challenging, particularly for pupils of middle and high ability
 - ensuring that all teachers use the assessment of pupils' attainment to plan lessons more effectively
 - providing better guidance for pupils on how they can improve their work.

- Improve the effectiveness of senior leaders, by:
 - ensuring that monitoring and evaluation systems accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for development and lead to effective strategies to tackle weaknesses
 - developing more robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

- Enable middle managers to be more effective in tackling underachievement, by:
 - ensuring that they have an accurate picture of the school's performance
 - providing them with further training to develop their leadership and management skills
 - giving them more opportunities to monitor teaching and learning and to tackle weaknesses, by holding other staff to account.

- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to account more fully for the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Thornbury Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on the 11 and 12 October 2011.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a representative from the local authority and staff.

Context

The school continues to be led by an executive headteacher who has been appointed to the substantive post of headteacher with effect from January 2012. He will remain as executive headteacher until this time. There have been several changes to the teaching staff with nine new appointments being made since the last monitoring inspection. Also, during this period, all the fixed-term teaching assistant posts were terminated and, following a review of the school's provision and needs, new posts were created and new appointments made to these. The IEB has one new member. The local authority continues to provide significant external support to school leaders through a range of consultants.

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

The rate of progress made by pupils in their learning is improving and the levels of attainment reached by pupils are rising. The results of national tests for Year 6 pupils in the school in 2011 show improved progress. Standards in English and mathematics are, for the first time in many years, above the government's targets. Pupils in Year 2 in 2011 reached significantly higher standards than in the previous year in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are variations. For example, girls did not attain as highly as boys in Year 6 in English or mathematics and no pupils attained the higher Level 3 in writing in Year 2. The overall rate of improved progress is similar for all groups of pupils, but the legacy of underachievement for some groups means that historical gaps in levels of attainment remain a concern.

School data, tracking the progress of pupils during the last full academic year, show significantly improving progress. The strongest improvement is seen for pupils in Year 2. All year groups made better progress. Progress was improved in both English and mathematics. Caution must be exercised with the school data because of previous insecure assessments which mean the starting points for the analysis of progress are not totally reliable. Nevertheless, overall, the data present a much improved profile of pupil progress than previously seen.

Monitoring of lessons by the local authority and school leaders shows pupils are making improved rates of progress across year groups and subjects. Observations of lessons by inspectors confirm their evaluation. A scrutiny of pupils' work in English and mathematics reveals that these improvements are continuing this term.

Taken overall, there is a much improved consistency to pupils' progress and this is beginning to ensure that pupils make up the lost ground of their underachievement in previous years. Leaders show no complacency and accept that much remains to be done before all groups of pupils achieve the standards of which they are capable.

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, and in all subjects – good

The effectiveness of provision

The proportion of good teaching, while relatively low, is improving. During this inspection a very large majority of lessons seen, which included all the newly appointed teachers, were judged as satisfactory or good. Local authority and school monitoring of teaching since the last monitoring inspection show similar improving outcomes. For example, classroom environments which were judged to be untidy and poorly managed at the last monitoring inspection, are all greatly improved. There is a whole-school consistency to the way classrooms are organised with each one displaying pupils' work in a bright and motivating way. Every classroom promotes pupils' learning by providing prompts and captions which act as an aide-memoire for previous learning of skills and knowledge.

In the best lessons observed by inspectors, improvements were seen in the reduced amount of teacher talk and increased time given for pupils to engage in the tasks set to challenge and develop their learning. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations of the amount of progress pupils should make in the time available and teachers' plans show clear and sharply defined objectives for pupils to learn new skills and knowledge. Also, in these good lessons, teaching assistants are fully involved in the delivery of learning to the whole class which increases pupils' interest and engagement. Perhaps the greatest improvement evident in the best lessons is the way in which teachers match the style of teaching to the learning needs of pupils. This was seen in a Year 4 literacy lesson in which the pupils were learning how to write imaginative introductory paragraphs to a story. The teacher varied the approach by giving explanations, asking questions and allowing the pupils time to discuss their ideas with each other. This was conducted with a clear expectation that pupils would work quickly and energetically. As a result, the objectives of the lesson were all reached well within the time available, allowing further opportunities to extend pupils' learning.

The satisfactory lessons are often characterised by too much time spent on one activity such as recapping the previous lesson. Teachers' plans in these lessons tend to be too broad so that the intentions for pupils' learning are similar regardless of what each group of pupils know or can do before the lesson starts. In some lessons teachers talk for too long or keep

the pupils engaged in question and answer sessions beyond the time needed to ensure pupils understand the task or activity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher is successfully building an effective senior leadership team which is improving the school's provision and the outcomes for pupils. There is significantly stronger strategic leadership and direction from the senior leaders. For example, a three-week cycle of improvements has begun to increase the proportion of good teaching observed. The staff have identified the key features of good lessons and each three-week period includes training, implementation of good practice and monitoring by senior leaders. In this way, leaders are ensuring that teachers build their skills in a systematic way. The outcome is that pupils are making improved progress across the school. Senior leaders have clearer roles and responsibilities and, due to this more effective deployment, they show greater confidence and independence when taking decisions to bring about improvements. The review of teaching assistant roles provides further evidence of the impact of senior leaders on the school's provision. Teaching assistants who spoke to inspectors said they are relishing their new responsibilities and they feel very well supported by school leaders. The impact of this is seen in the improved stability for pupils when staff are absent on training courses. In the classroom, teaching assistants are playing an increasing role in teaching delivery and this is helping to improve the learning experience for pupils.

Middle leaders are improving the impact of their work on the school's provision. In particular, the core subject leaders are more rigorous in their monitoring roles and more accurate in their subsequent evaluations. Consequently, senior leaders and the IEB are better informed regarding the school's performance. A good example of the impact of this monitoring is shown by the revised curriculum timetable. The start of the school day has been improved by reducing the time taken to begin the first lessons and by ensuring that English and mathematics are taught earlier in the day when pupils' concentration is best.

The IEB has improved its ability to hold the school to account for its performance. Minutes of IEB meetings show an improving level of challenge with regular questioning of school leaders. Recruitment procedures show a robust determination to appoint high quality candidates to any vacancies. Improvements to the quality of monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders are improving the accuracy of information available to the IEB and strengthening its ability to challenge and support leaders' initiatives to improve the school.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of senior leaders – good
- Enable middle managers to be more effective in tackling underachievement – good
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to account more fully for the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils – good

External support

The school continues to receive good support from the local authority. Consultants regularly lead staff training and provide examples of best practice for the Early Years Foundation Stage, literacy and school improvement. The School Improvement Partner has been retained by the local authority and she provides accurate and challenging scrutiny of school leaders' strategies for improvement.