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4 November 2011

Mr M Fry
Headteacher
Ravensthorpe Primary School
Brigstock Court
Peterborough
PE3 7NB

Dear Mr Fry

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ravensthorpe Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 and 3 November 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 5 October 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 – 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 Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards of attainment so that the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age at the end of Year 6 is consistently in line with the national average by:
 - ensuring pupils who fall behind are identified quickly and given additional support so they make rapid progress in their learning
 - ensuring all teaching is matched to the full range of learners' needs and abilities
 - ensuring marking and feedback enable pupils to improve their work
 - providing regular opportunities to read and analyse texts for a variety of purposes.

- Improve the curriculum so it meets the needs and interests of all pupils by:
 - developing and sharing a curriculum overview that shows how pupils will develop core skills across different subjects
 - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to learn through interesting experiences
 - ensuring that dual-language resources are available to support early reading in English for pupils who speak English as an additional language
 - providing opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills in different subjects
 - providing challenging opportunities for pupils to solve problems, develop arguments and consider open-ended questions.

- Improve leadership at all levels so leaders, managers and governors effectively drive school improvement based on accurate self-evaluation by:
 - developing the skills of the governing body so that it provides appropriate challenge and is fully aware of its statutory duties
 - increasing capacity at the most senior level so the school's self-evaluation is based on accurate analysis of evidence and leads to clear school improvement planning
 - developing a clear vision so that middle leaders understand what is expected of them and receive appropriate guidance and support in fulfilling their roles.

Special measures: monitoring of Ravensthorpe Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 November 2011.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including 18 part-lessons with the headteacher, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of staff, a group of pupils, four representatives of the governing body, and the Head of School Improvement from the local authority.

Context

A new headteacher started in September 2011. The deputy headteacher was granted a sabbatical for the autumn term and has since resigned. Temporary arrangements have been made to cover the deputy headteacher position within the school in addition to the appointment of a class teacher, for one year. A special educational needs coordinator has been appointed for up to two days per week. Of the six teachers in post at the time of the last visit, five have been allocated to different year groups this term. Two new teaching assistants have been appointed to provide specialist in-class support in Year 1. The three vacancies on the governing body reported at the last visit, remain. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language has increased since the previous inspection.

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

Unvalidated results for 2011 and school assessment data indicate a mixed picture of performance across cohorts and groups of pupils. A positive feature is that the gap with national standards is closing in Key Stage 2. Despite a modest rise in attainment in English, boys perform significantly less well than the national picture in reading and writing. The attainment gap between boys and girls is much wider than the national gap. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals exceed national results in English. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do less well than similar pupils national. Improvement in mathematics was stronger than in English, with standards close to average. The proportion of Year 6 pupils to make the expected two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 also improved, particularly in mathematics.

The predicted dip in standards at the end of Key Stage 1 is shown in significantly below average standards in reading and writing, particularly for boys. This is explained in part by the number of new arrivals during Key Stage 1 who are at an early stage in learning English. However, the previous visit found that provision was not sufficiently developed to help pupils who speak English as an additional language to catch up. They attain less well in reading and writing than national comparisons.

The attainment gap between boys and girls in reading and writing is much wider than the national gap, as is the case in Key Stage 2. Attainment improved in mathematics to close the gap with national standards.

The school's rigorous analysis of performance has led to a sharper focus on boys' achievement. Both boys and girls have responded positively to improvements to the learning environment and additional resources to promote reading for information and pleasure. The best guided reading sessions are purposeful, with challenging activities to engage pupils, linked to cross-curricular themes. This is not consistent across classes. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now systematically identified. Teachers are developing the skills to promote language development through visual resources, an increased focus on oral work and peer support. Pupils with complex learning needs enjoy and gain benefit from a new sensory circuit designed to promote their development.

Pupils respond positively to a wider range of practical tasks. Themes introduced this term on space and dinosaurs have captured pupils' imagination, and particularly that of boys. They provide additional opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. In one lesson observed, pupils were enthusiastic about the chance to investigate and measure 'dinosaur footprints' placed around the school. An increase in partner and group work is helping to keep pupils focused on their learning. There are still occasions, however, when pupils have to listen to the teacher for too long. Pupils are showing greater confidence in tackling independent work although they do not always have the necessary learning skills to sustain their efforts. Learning falters when there is insufficient guidance as pupils move from a whole-class activity to group or individual work. The visit highlighted a lack of consistency across the school linked to pupils' presentation and handwriting.

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

- raise standards of attainment so that the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age at the end of Year 6 is consistently in line with the national average – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Since the last visit, new policies have been agreed for attendance and behaviour. Attendance has improved this term. Lessons are characterised by good behaviour, excellent relationships, and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work well in groups and respond well to an atmosphere where learning is shared. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to give their views and suggestions, for example, on improvements to the environment. A successful initiative has been the introduction of language ambassadors who speak a wide range of languages. Pupils are enthusiastic about the prospect of welcoming new children and their families, helping them to settle

and suggesting improvements to visual displays around the school. Pupils enjoy school and show respect to one another.

The effectiveness of provision

Since the last visit, staff have agreed on the features of high quality provision characterised by a creative curriculum designed to engage, excite and support all groups of pupils. This has produced a shared vision for lessons that is evident in improved levels of interaction and better use of partner and group work in all classes. All staff have made a good practice visit to another primary school to gather ideas for teaching pupils who speak English as an additional language. Staff have been inspired to create a more exciting visual learning environment. Classroom displays now provide helpful reference points to support pupils' learning. Lesson planning has improved, with a sharper focus on the needs of different groups of pupils. Examples of good practice were observed in the use of assessment in lessons to monitor pupils' progress. However, assessment is not always used well enough by teachers to gather feedback on learning so that plans can be adjusted to meet emerging needs. Planned opportunities for role play and discussion are promoting confidence and language development. Open-ended questions now encourage pupils to think about their answers and prompt them for extended responses. Problem solving and investigative approaches are helping pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these new approaches on pupils' progress in reading and writing.

Teachers are becoming more familiar with the standards expected of pupils in their new teaching groups. Joint planning across key stages, regular moderation of pupils' work and a new focus on the progression of skills are helping to strengthen provision. The systematic delivery of phonics to underpin improvement in reading is a weaker aspect of provision. Staff changes mean that some teachers do not have the necessary skills to support pupils' phonic knowledge and understanding. Leaders have plans to tackle this.

The contribution of teaching assistants is carefully planned and pupils appreciate the help and support they receive. Training continues to enable them to deliver programmes to meet a wider range of pupils' needs. Access to specialist services, such as speech therapists, has improved to support children and their families. Communication with parents and carers has developed with the introduction of a home contact book and events to promote closer relationships. These initiatives, including regular newsletters, have been well received. For new arrivals to the school, a 'welcome book' has been devised to strengthen induction.

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

- improve the curriculum so it meets the needs and interests of all pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

In a short time, the headteacher has been successful in building a strong team spirit across the school, with a shared vision for the future. New approaches have been adopted and teachers have been willing to refresh their practice by working with a different year group. Gaps in teachers' knowledge have been identified, with opportunities provided to visit other schools and to undertake joint planning. Roles within the new leadership team are clearly defined, supported by a published monitoring and training calendar.

A priority from the previous visit was to develop provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language. The first stage of awareness raising has been successful. The headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body have also conducted interviews with pupils to gather insights on their experiences. This has led to a greater understanding of language and cultural barriers. Planning is advanced to provide further specialist training on effective teaching and learning strategies.

Subject leaders in literacy and numeracy, and key stage leaders, have continued to conduct planning and book scrutiny, and to hold pupil progress meeting with staff. However, this approach is not complemented by regular lesson observation to share good practice and coach teachers to strengthen consistency. Appropriate priorities are identified in the development plan. The next stage is to devise detailed action plans for phonics, reading and writing, with rigorous monitoring and coaching so that teachers can hone their skills to tackle weaknesses.

Members of the governing body are developing the skills necessary to evaluate strengths and weaker aspects of provision. They are proactive about training on assessment data to ensure that they have an accurate view of the school's performance. A programme of visits enables governors to gather first-hand evidence of the school's work. New approaches are being adopted to recruit governors through closer links with parents and carers.

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

- improve leadership at all levels so leaders, managers and governors effectively drive school improvement based on accurate self-evaluation – satisfactory.

External support

External advisers and subject consultants have provided valuable support to the new headteacher and acting deputy headteacher to analyse performance data and to refine targets for Year 6 pupils. Regular meetings continue with the previous acting headteacher as a local leader in education. Training and support for the subject

leader in mathematics has strengthened the scrutiny of planning and pupils' work, and led to a higher profile for mathematics through classroom displays. Good practice visits have stimulated improvements to provision.