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6 December 2011

Ms Dobson
Headteacher
Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant School
Orchard Head Lane
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
WF8 2NJ

Dear Ms Dobson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 December 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 November 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 be appointed in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school must have the agreement of the monitoring inspector prior to appointing Newly Qualified Teachers in Key Stage 2.

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 Corporate Director Family Services for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Rapidly improve pupils' progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan appropriately for the needs of all pupils
 - holding all teachers fully to account for the progress made by pupils in their care
 - developing the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils
 - increasing the impact of monitoring by middle and senior leaders on what happens routinely in the classrooms.

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging the school to improve by:
 - holding leaders and staff fully to account for pupils' progress and attainment
 - ensuring that rigorous and systematic evaluation fully informs strategic planning
 - making sure that all governors take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating how successfully the school meets the needs of all learners.

- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on school performance by:
 - improving teaching to consistently good or better by the end of the 2010/11 academic year
 - ensuring that realistically challenging targets are set for pupils so they know how to improve further
 - ensuring monitoring processes are sufficiently rigorous and effective in improving outcomes for all pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 December 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and twelve part lessons, with an emphasis on the performance of pupils in Year 5 and Year 6; scrutinised the work of pupils in Key Stage 2, as well as unvalidated assessment data from the end of Key Stage 2 national tests for 2011; scrutinised documents; met with the headteacher, consultant headteacher and senior members of staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The school is now part of the Pontefract Education Trust (PET), which includes two local secondary schools and 12 feeder primary schools. Long-term staff absences are being managed effectively by senior leaders. Three new teachers have joined the school since the start of this academic year. The support from the consultant headteacher ceases at the end of this term.

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

Outcomes for the end of Key Stage 1 assessments in 2011 continue to show an improving trend in the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels. However, pupils' attainment in the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2011 was significantly low when compared to all pupils nationally. Although the national floor standards were met in relation to pupils attaining the expected Level 4 at Key Stage 2 in reading and mathematics, outcomes were marginally below in writing. At both key stages very few pupils attained the higher levels in English and mathematics. The underlying reasons behind this underperformance in Year 6 have been subject to a thorough review by the school and the local authority which reveals two major factors. One was the inadequate teaching identified at the last inspection and the other relates to the recording of inaccurate assessments and tracking information, a flaw already acknowledged by the current leadership team. Senior leaders have been quick to respond to the situation. A base-line assessment for all pupils, including the 2011 cohort of Year 6 pupils, led to a programme of intense intervention. These actions, combined with more-effective teaching, ensured that Year 6 pupils made good progress over the course of last year. However, when compared to all pupils nationally the cohort underperformed significantly. All pupils are now being correctly targeted to reach their potential and the school is determined in its efforts to ensure more pupils attain the higher levels. These appropriate actions to stem the tide of underperformance are just beginning to bear fruit but they are not embedded fully in raising levels of attainment for all pupils across the school.

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

- rapidly improve pupils' progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to enjoy their learning. Playground helpers, trained by the local authority, keep a watchful eye on their peers during break and lunchtimes. They appreciate and respond appropriately to the regular positive reinforcement of good work and behaviour, which has done much to raise pupils' self-esteem and promotes good attitudes to learning.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve in all year groups. In lessons observed during the inspection, progress was generally satisfactory, but more accelerated where the pace of teaching was more rapid and pupils were able to explore elements of their learning independently. Opportunities for all pupils to explore their learning more independently are at an early stage of development.

A consistent approach to teachers' planning is evident throughout school and pupils are now aware of the intended learning outcomes for each lesson. However, not all pupils, particularly older ones, understand what work at the higher levels looks like. The school is to look at ways of providing pupils and their parents and carers with exemplars of work in English and mathematics at the higher levels.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to make more accelerated progress as a result of the highly effective and good quality provision. The school has correctly identified the strengths of leadership and teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and staff are deploying these skills across Key Stage 1. For example, the learning environment for the youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 has been transformed so that they can access quality indoor and outdoor learning and work increasingly independently.

Following consultation with parents and carers, pupils and staff, the new curriculum is now in place. Pupils enjoy the new and exciting opportunities devised by teachers for exploring their learning in more interesting ways. For example, a mixed Year 3 and Year 4 class, studying the Second World War, delighted in cooking food with very limited quantities of basic ingredients and giving their verdicts on the taste of their finished products. The impact of the new handwriting policy can be seen in the much clearer and legible script in pupils' books.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership of the school has been strengthened by the addition of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader to the senior leadership team. Of particular note is her positive impact on more effective practice in Key Stage 1 and her work in managing the roles of teaching assistants throughout the school.

As external support continues to be withdrawn, the substantive headteacher and the deputy headteacher work effectively with their senior team to bring about improvements. Half-termly pupil progress meetings, linked to outcomes from lesson observations, provide the focus for individual staff action plans. These plans are reviewed at each pupil progress meeting where individual teachers' targets for improvement are evaluated prior to new ones being set. The deputy headteacher takes a key role in coaching and modelling good teaching and her undoubted skills can be called upon if needed to provide support.

The new members of staff have received appropriate induction to the working life of the school and have made a promising start in their first term. Senior leaders are well established in their roles in monitoring and evaluation. The next phase of developing the role of middle leaders, delayed slightly a result of staff changes and absence, is about to get underway. A scrutiny of plans for their roles in monitoring and evaluating their subjects confirms that the school is on the right track for this group to hold colleagues to account for the progress of the pupils they teach.

The IEB continues to work highly effectively and its members are moving forward rapidly with plans to reconstitute a full governing body. They support the school very well offering their professional expertise where appropriate. For example, the coordinator for special educational needs is to work with the vice-chair of the IEB on scrutiny of performance data.

All staff are now willing to learn from one another's strengths and all in school are committed to raising levels of pupils' attainment.

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

- improve the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging the school to improve – good
- strengthen the impact of leadership and management on school performance – satisfactory

External support

The school's work with the PET enables senior leaders to access training and support for teachers and teaching assistants. The local authority continues to offer practical support where necessary. For example, its personnel have secured the services of a lead behaviour specialist to assist in guiding new teachers in behaviour management strategies.