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8 December 2011

Mr Cottle
Headteacher
Moorthorpe Primary (J and I) School
Regent Street
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Cottle

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Moorthorpe Primary (J and I) School

Following my visit with Doreen Davenport, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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 – 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 Wakefield.

Yours sincerely,

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on June 2011

- Raise levels of attainment and improve the rate of pupils' progress by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better
 - devising systems to monitor pupils' progress and taking prompt decisive action to identify and arrest underachievement
 - ensuring that pupils' progress does not slow when they transfer from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1.

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
 - building more opportunities in the curriculum to develop pupils' writing skills
 - developing a consistent approach to correcting spellings, punctuation and grammar in all subjects
 - paying more attention to presentation and handwriting.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - establishing systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - identifying a manageable number of key priorities and producing a detailed action plan to bring about improvements
 - introducing more rigour in the way staff evaluate the quality of the school's work
 - providing staff with opportunities to engage in professional development activities that are carefully aligned to the schools key priorities and will meet their individual development needs
 - ensuring that assessment data are reliable and staff thoroughly understand how to use them to provide work that is consistently well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.

Special measures: monitoring of Moorthorpe Primary (J and I) School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 December 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised management documents and pupils' books and met with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Following the inspection in June, the headteacher resigned and an interim headteacher has been appointed until July 2012. Previous instability to staffing has largely been resolved. Over the past year there have been significant changes to the leadership and composition of the governing body.

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

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and teachers have improved the quality of teaching and introduced much more effective systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress. As a result, lesson observations, work in exercise books and school records show that pupils are making better progress in English and mathematics. This is beginning to have a positive impact on attainment as shown by a small increase in the number of pupils working at the levels expected for their age. Around a fifth of pupils are accelerating their progress considerably and rapidly getting closer to achieving what they are capable of. In a minority of classes, pupils of all abilities are improving their progress because work is well adapted to their differing needs. In others, however, some groups are making less progress because there is either insufficient challenge for the more able or activities are not suitable for the less able.

Teachers have increased their focus on improving pupils' writing and their work is beginning to bear fruit. The factual and imaginative writing on display shows that older pupils are improving their skills in adapting their style for different purposes. Younger pupils are beginning to gain more confidence in writing independently, relying less on teachers' worksheets.

Teachers are beginning to make effective use of the improved progress records to plan additional support for pupils who are falling behind. They carefully check the impact of this support and, in most cases it is helping those pupils to catch up. Additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also effective and school records show that their achievement is improving. The small but growing number of pupils who have recently arrived from Eastern European countries are supported well in learning English and they quickly take a full part in normal lessons. School leaders, with the support of the

local authority, have effectively managed recent staff absence in the Early Years Foundation Stage and avoided any decline in the children's progress since the previous inspection.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise levels of attainment and improve the rate of pupils' progress - satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour and positive attitudes to work were judged as strengths in the previous inspection and this continues to be the case. Their eagerness to learn and willingness to work hard make a strong contribution to their improving progress. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was beginning to reverse a decline in attendance. School leaders and staff have intensified this work, which has accelerated the rate of improvement and attendance is currently above average. Pupils' increasing enjoyment of school is central to this improvement.

Over the past year, school leaders and the governing body have worked very hard to improve safeguarding arrangements and pupils have contributed significantly to their decision-making, especially in relation to increasing the safety of the school building and playground. Older pupils have recently made an important positive contribution to their community by making a film which powerfully shows the effect of anti-social behaviour on senior citizens. The film won an award from the police service and is being used as an education resource in local schools. The research, planning and scripting for the film provided many pupils with very good opportunities to extend their writing skills.

The effectiveness of provision

While teaching overall has improved since the previous inspection, it is not consistently strong enough to ensure pupils make better progress in every class. There is more good and outstanding teaching, however, a small proportion remains inadequate. As a result of the work of school leaders to improve the use of assessment information, most teachers have a much clearer understanding of pupils' levels of attainment. They are not all equally skilled in planning lessons that take account of the whole range of levels within their class, although the vast majority are working very diligently to accomplish this.

The most effective lessons have a clear and focused learning objective, which has been determined on the basis of an accurate assessment of pupils' previous work. Stimulating teaching enthuses pupils and there is a very positive climate for learning in which they improve their work through discussion and independently accessing guidance from well-planned wall displays. Pupils are typically engrossed in interesting problem-solving activities, often involving them in constructive discussion with other members of their group. Where teaching is less effective there is a lack of clarity in what pupils are intended to learn, therefore, too many different ideas are introduced and pupils become confused. The pace of learning is slow because pupils spend too long sitting and listening to explanations that add

little to their understanding. Teaching assistants are not always deployed in a way that supports pupils' learning. The majority of pupils know their targets in terms of the levels they are aiming for in the longer term and this motivates them to work hard. Not all pupils, however, have a clear understanding of where precisely they should focus their effort in the immediate future to help them improve their work.

Teachers are beginning to make more effective use of different subjects to extend pupils' English and mathematics skills. In mathematics, for example, pupils' interest in solving problems is increased by linking their work to the Victorian households they are learning about in history. Pupils are extending their writing skills in tasks linked to real-life situations, such as replying to a newspaper advert or contributing to a book about their town. They are also widening their range of styles through such work as writing a dialogue based on a Shakespeare play, writing a letter from the perspective of someone in the past, evaluating a cartoon or reporting their work in science.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and use of assessment so that it is consistently good or better – satisfactory
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing, especially in Key Stage 1 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher form a very strong partnership in tackling the school's causes for concern. They have established a shared determination amongst staff to improve pupils' outcomes as quickly as possible and they have maintained the confidence of parents and carers. The deputy headteacher made a very strong contribution to these achievements with her sensitive and effective leadership in the weeks immediately following the inspection, before the interim headteacher took up his post.

The main driver for the school improvement achieved so far is the senior leaders' thorough and systematic approach to evaluating the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Lessons are regularly observed and teachers are given detailed feedback on their strengths and priorities for improvement. Almost every teacher has a clear understanding of what they need to concentrate on to improve their work. To help them improve, senior leaders have set up a comprehensive programme of support, tailored to each teacher's individual needs. This includes guidance from themselves or external consultants, visits to see effective practice in other schools and attendance on courses. The success of this approach is seen in the improvements to teaching and pupils' outcomes in the short time since the inspection.

Senior leaders are making increasingly effective use of information from the new pupil progress records to determine where improvement is most needed. They are, for example, gaining a much clearer understanding of the aspects of the curriculum that need to be strengthened to raise attainment. They are also closely monitoring pupils' progress in reading to ensure that it does not slip while additional attention is being given to the

teaching of writing. They know in detail which pupils need more support or challenge to achieve the levels of which they are capable and a middle leader has drawn up a well-considered plan to bring this about.

The governing body is adding rigour to the school's self-evaluation by frequently reviewing it and checking that it is leading to improvements in pupils' achievement. The governing body and senior leaders share a clear and ambitious vision for bringing the school out of special measures as soon as possible, central to which are challenging targets for improving attainment. The school has a coherent and focused plan for achieving these targets, although this needs some refinement as recent evaluations of teaching and progress have given senior leaders a more detailed understanding of the areas of provision that need to be improved.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – good

External support

The local authority's support plan is fit for purpose and ensures that the school will receive the external expertise and resources it needs within an appropriate timescale. Its early support was particularly effective in stabilising staffing, strengthening the governing body and appointing an interim headteacher with considerable experience of leading the recovery of schools causing concern. Since then, school leaders have an increasing involvement in decisions about the precise nature of external support based on their more detailed and accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in provision. The local authority has clear arrangements for keeping the school's progress under review.