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2 February 2012

Mrs M Hill
Headteacher
Marlpool Junior School
Claramount Road
Heanor
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Dear Mrs Hill

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Marlpool Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 31 January–1 February 2012, 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 1 February 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 – good.

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 [see list below for whom to copy this to], the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2011

- Eradicate underachievement in all year groups and improve the profile of teaching and learning so that the large majority is good or better by ensuring that:
 - all inadequate teaching is eradicated as a matter of urgency
 - assessment information is used to plan work to meet the needs of all pupils and challenges pupils of all abilities
 - all teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn in lessons and carefully guide pupils through the small steps which help them to learn effectively
 - regular feedback on how to improve their work is given to pupils in lessons and through marking
 - the work given to pupils motivates them to learn and teachers do not talk for too long
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to practice their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - the curriculum builds systematically on pupils' prior knowledge and skills and curriculum planning gives teachers helpful guidance on how match pupils' work to their capabilities.

- Strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement by:
 - using the assessment information more rigorously to monitor the progress made by different groups of pupils, evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives on raising pupils' achievement and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - ensuring that lessons observations and monitoring work in pupils' books are carried out regularly, systematically and rigorously, and leaders give teachers clear guidance on how to improve pupils' learning
 - ensuring that the governing body is provided with accurate information so that it can hold the school to account effectively.

Special measures: monitoring of Marlpool Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 31 January–1 February 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and a group of teachers. The inspector also met with pupils to talk to them about the work in their books and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Context

Since the last visit, two teachers have reduced their hours and they are sharing a class. One newly qualified teacher has been appointed. One senior leader remains at the school on a long-term secondment.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Progress in lessons is accelerating and the majority of teaching is good. The accuracy of the school's assessment of progress is more precise. However, this has revealed some inaccuracies in previous assessments which were over optimistic. The school now has accurate data and this is helping to identify individuals and groups of pupils who are underachieving. For example, leaders identified a group of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who were not making enough progress. They implemented some small group work to support the pupils with specific reading approaches. This group are now on track to make the progress expected of them. The school has accurately identified other groups where gaps remain. The effective action leaders have taken is reducing these gaps quickly. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making the progress expected of them more consistently. For pupils in Years 5 and 6 there remain some gaps, particularly in their reading skills. However, progress is accelerating and pupils' reading and writing are improving. Pupils' progress in mathematics continues to be in line with expectations.

Pupils tackle their work with enthusiasm and they work hard. They are developing independence and resilience in tackling challenging work. Questions are consistently met with eager 'hands up' from pupils who want to share their thoughts. However, at times, questions are not planned well enough to meet the needs of individual pupils. Work in pupils' books demonstrates accelerated improvement. Pupils' present their work carefully, especially in topic work and in literacy. Sometimes the work in mathematics books is not as well presented and precision is hampered when pupils do not draw diagrams and shapes using rulers.

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

- eradicate underachievement in all year groups and improve the profile of teaching and learning so that the large majority is good or better – good.

The quality of teaching

The profile of teaching continues to strengthen. The school's monitoring indicates good teaching is more consistent and that, where teaching is satisfactory, this is improving strongly. Teachers are keen to improve their practice and they have combined to form a strong reflective team. The occasions when teachers talk for too long are now much reduced. Consequently, pupils spend more time actively engaged in interesting activities that spark their imagination and engage them. For example, in a good design and technology lesson, Year 4 pupils eagerly analysed toys with turning mechanisms and used their research to design and build their own. Teachers plan a range of exciting and interesting tasks which involve skills across the curriculum. One pupil commented, 'I did not like literacy before but, now I can't tell the difference between it and topic work, it's really interesting.'

Teachers are using the now accurate assessment data well to meet the needs of pupils. Tasks are designed to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. However, there are still a few occasions when the level of challenge is not sufficiently high to maintain good progress, particularly for the most able. Teachers make good use of the lively learning environment. Pupils are becoming less reliant on teachers and teaching assistants. In the best examples, pupils are routinely guided to seek the answer independently. However, there are still a few times when pupils are given answers too readily. For example, teaching assistants sometimes give pupils spellings when the word is displayed prominently in the classroom. That said, the work of teaching assistants has improved and they have made great strides in improving the questions they ask pupils and, consequently, the progress of supported groups is increasingly rapid.

Themes, such as the life of the Victorians and Egypt, are used by teachers to help pupils gain independent and investigative skills. Learning through investigation is increasingly common and pupils speak with enthusiasm about their research. They were particularly enthused by the opportunity to showcase their work to parents and carers. For example, Year 3 pupils relished sharing their knowledge of the practical processes of mummification with their parents and carers.

Pupils assess their own work frequently and teachers develop a dialogue with pupils in their books, prompting pupils to tackle additional challenges or rectify earlier errors. This is not consistent across the school, and teachers do not always recognise patterns in pupils' errors, for example the spelling of different types of words. Teachers offer pupils good quality feedback in lessons. Pupils check the quality of their finished work against specific success criteria. Teachers are

developing ways of helping pupils to make these checks throughout tasks so that pupils can reshape and improve their work as they go.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They have developed mature attitudes to learning and demonstrate self-discipline when they are working in small groups and pairs. The behaviour ladders continue to have a good impact and pupils say they are being applied fairly. They enjoy the rewards and value the recognition this brings, especially having personal praise from the headteacher. Parents and carers also see these rewards as having a positive impact on their child's learning.

Behaviour on the playground is more boisterous but pupils are cheerful and friendly. They socialise well together and make good use of the equipment made available to them. Pupils feel safe and have faith that, should they have a problem, it will be addressed. However, they have more confidence in some staff than in others.

Attendance has improved and it is now above average. The school is working effectively with its cluster partners to improve the strategies to promote good attendance. Leaders have been effective in reducing the occasions when pupils miss school because of family holidays. The tracking of the attendance of different groups of pupils is at an early stage.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The senior team has lived up to its initial promise and the school is less reliant on external support. The school has systematic processes to monitor the quality of teaching and track the progress pupils make. Lesson observations are accurate and leaders follow these through with precise targets and appropriate professional development. Improvements, though marked, are recent and have not had time to have a sustained impact.

Leaders have been successful, with the help of the local authority, in securing permanent appointments to the teaching staff. This has given the school much needed stability and resulted in a notable acceleration in progress. Improvements in teaching, attendance and progress are clear markers of success. The governing body continue to develop their role and this is aided by the more detailed and helpful reports that the school now produces.

Changes to the curriculum have given pupils some memorable experiences and supported teachers in planning learning that lends itself to active engagement. Leaders have evaluated the new curriculum effectively but learning walks and the monitoring of pupils' work in books do not pay sufficient attention to the impact it has had on improving literacy, numeracy and communication skills.

The headteacher, now ably supported by the senior team, continues to build secure foundations for an increasingly rapid route to recovery.

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

- strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to support the school well. Their role in the school is reducing as leaders become increasingly confident and adept at evaluating the school's work and implementing improvements.