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23 February 2012

Mr Richards
Headteacher
Thornbury Primary School
Dick Lane
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD3 7AU

Dear Mr Richards

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Thornbury Primary School

Following my visit with Kathryn Dodd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 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 fourth 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 – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed subject to a maximum of one in each key stage.

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 Strategic Director - Services to Children & Young People, Bradford.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



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 fourth monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 February 2012

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the executive headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher and took up his post on 1 January 2012. Three temporary teachers are currently covering the short-term absences of three full-time permanent teachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Overall, pupils' achievement continues to improve. The outcomes of monitoring by the school, local authority and an independent educational consultant show increasing percentages of pupils making improved progress. In most lessons seen by inspectors, pupils were seen to make better progress. The work in pupils' books confirms this. There remains considerable variation across the school and between some groups of pupils. The most improved progress is in Year 2 due to very effective teamwork which ensures consistently good teaching so pupils make consistently good progress. As a result, levels of attainment are rising sharply towards the end of Key Stage 1. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is improving steadily but is inconsistent. For example, over time, Year 6 assessment data show that girls do not make as much progress as boys. In 2011 national tests for Year 6 pupils and in the Year 2 teacher assessments, girls attained significantly lower levels of attainment than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. School data tracking the progress made by pupils in the autumn term 2011 show that the gap between girls and boys is closing; girls are making much better progress than previously but differences in attainment remain. Some groups of pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs are making a slower rate of improvement and this varies significantly between classes and year groups.

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 – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

Since the last monitoring inspection, due to the headteacher's rigorous drive for improvement, the percentage of inadequate teaching has been significantly reduced and almost eradicated. A small percentage of outstanding lessons, the first to be evident in recent years, has been observed by the local authority. This demonstrates the impact of leaders' actions to bring about improvement. Some parts of the school, such as in Year 2, have improved to the point where pupils are now making accelerated progress due to the impact of consistently better teaching. Inspectors' observations confirm this. Across the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is still too much satisfactory teaching which does not enable pupils with historically low levels of attainment to make up the lost ground quickly enough. Although there is more good teaching than previously seen, the rate of improvement is slower than the school hoped for. Consequently, more time is needed to embed and sustain the improvements to teaching and to ensure this translates into consistently improved rates of progress.

Improvements to the classroom learning environments are most notable. The vast majority of classrooms are brightly displayed with pupils' work, contain useful aids for pupils' learning, such as list of words or sounds, and are well organised so that pupils can easily access resources independently. The quality of teachers' marking is significantly improved and there is a high level of consistent application of the school's policy for marking. Teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of planning and this shows some improvement to the focus on learning. The use of assessment to inform the planning is not consistently well used and this remains a weakness which was identified at the last full inspection. In turn, this contributes to the slow pace of learning in some lessons where all pupils are set the same level of challenge.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attendance is improving as shown by the comparable school data for similar periods of time year-on-year. Persistent absence is broadly similar over time and compares favourably with national expectations. Punctuality is improving. These improvements are being well supported by improvements to the quality of teaching which encourages pupils to attend school regularly and on time. The school has suitable procedures in place for checking the suitability of school staff including checks to the criminal records bureau. These checks are kept appropriately on a single central register in the school. There is a behaviour policy in place which is currently under review by school leaders. Some inconsistent application of the policy's sanctions for misbehaviour leads to occasional low-level disruption in lessons, although pupils say this is reducing. The new revised policy outlined by leaders is an improvement on the existing policy but it does not include appropriate use of plans to support improvements to pupils' behaviour at an early enough stage. Similarly, individual education plans, which are currently in place and include some targets for improving pupils' behaviour, do not sharply identify the specific areas for the required improvement. Systems and arrangements to support pupils for whom a statement of special educational needs may be required are improving. There are better partnerships with external multi-agency support

services, For example, a local authority officer has recently been linked to the school and this is providing improved liaison and communication.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher provides increasingly rigorous and clear direction for the school's improvement. He inspires staff to be more confident to bring about improvement. He is building an increasingly effective senior team of leaders who are encouraged to take more responsibility and improved decision-making roles. Senior leaders are expanding their impact on school improvement but much still depends on the drive and expertise of the headteacher. Since the last monitoring inspection he has brought about significant improvement to the school's tracking system to measure pupils' attainment and progress. It is early days, but the signs are that this is beginning to enable leaders and all teachers to have a clearer picture of pupils' learning needs. Middle leaders are beginning to provide improved monitoring of the school's performance. A notable development is the recent introduction of 'trawls' which seek to triangulate the outcomes of monitoring lessons, pupils' work and school data about pupils' attainment and progress.

The IEB is improving its level of challenge to the school helped by the better quality of information coming from school leaders. Minutes of meetings show regular questions about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Members of the IEB have received training about the new Ofsted inspection framework to improve their understanding of the inspection process. The IEB has not established clear succession planning systems. There is no plan for the strategic management of the school beyond the current temporary position of the IEB.

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

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

External support

The local authority School Improvement Adviser and independent educational consultant provide good support to the school. Reports from their monitoring visits are helpful and evaluative. Support to the school from external agencies, with regard to pupils who may require additional help through the statementing procedures for special educational needs, are developing soundly.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the consistency of good and better teaching across the whole school including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.