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2 March 2012

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 29 February–1 March 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 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 29 February–1 March 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including 17 part-lessons and three intervention sessions, seven with the headteacher, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the headteacher, members of staff, pupils, two representatives of the governing body and the School Improvement Adviser from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous visit, the acting deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for subject leadership in mathematics. A performance management system has been introduced for teaching assistants. Three vacancies on the governing body reported at the time of the last visit have been filled.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards are rising and rates of progress increasing but the legacy of inconsistent teaching means gaps in learning remain. Variation is evident across classes and between different groups of pupils. Since the last visit, a high priority has been set to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to support pupils' phonic knowledge and understanding and their reading skills. Effective modelling, good practice visits to local schools and support from the literacy subject leader and external consultant have increased the confidence and expertise of teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, planning and delivery of phonic sessions are better matched to pupils' needs. Pupils are now active participants and enjoy opportunities to share their learning. Specialist phonics provision for pupils at an early stage of learning English is supported by more effective liaison with class teachers. Recent training on meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language, including new arrivals, has resulted in additional visual resources and prompts to develop vocabulary, and increased opportunities for speaking and listening.

Leaders have been successful in raising the profile of reading through new resources, particularly to motivate boys, and a revised approach to guided reading. Leaders recognise that the school's best practice is not consistent across classes. New class reading books in Key Stage 2 have been well received by pupils and encourage a shared approach to reading. High quality training has led to the delivery of a successful range of intervention programmes. Rigorous monitoring of progress ensures that targeted pupils receive appropriate support. A growing number of

volunteers make a valuable contribution by listening to pupils read, including those at an early stage in learning English.

The school has continued to refine systems to track pupil progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although this provides helpful analysis of progress across groups of learners, it does not take enough account of national benchmarks to review targets and further sharpen self-evaluation.

Pupils continue to respond positively to a wider range of topics that engage their interest. Year 1 pupils were encouraged to name parts of a castle and use their imagination to describe the scene. Year 2 pupils explored their feelings as 'knights', 'royals', 'servants' and 'entertainers' as the 'black knight' approached. Cross-curricular topic work is helping to develop writing skills, although school data indicates that the attainment gap is still too wide between boys and girls. Plans are advanced to explore this more closely through pupil discussions. A focus on presentation and handwriting skills is beginning to show progress. Pupils receive improved guidance on letter formation and show motivation to develop and demonstrate their skills.

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.

The quality of teaching

Variation in teaching quality across classes means that pupils' learning and progress remains uneven across Years 1 to 6. The proportion of consistently good teaching is not high enough to tackle gaps in learning and meet the diverse needs of learners. This is a barrier to higher standards. This means that intervention strategies such as one-to-one tuition and reading recovery are a crucial aspect of provision.

Teachers are using a wider range of strategies such as role play, problem solving and practical tasks to engage pupils in their learning. This is particularly effective when the teacher has a thorough knowledge of pupils' prior attainment to plan tasks with an appropriate level of challenge. Year 5 pupils developed their understanding of fractions and percentages with confidence through a range of tasks knowing that peer and adult support was readily available. One group of pupils demonstrated their independent learning skills by preparing resources to present to the class. Year 6 pupils were completely engrossed in a science lesson which had been skilfully planned to hone prediction and observation skills. Teaching assistants ensured that all pupils understood the key vocabulary to accelerate their learning. The strong emphasis on speaking and listening and partner work increased opportunities for pupils to discuss and extend their learning.

Teaching is less effective when the purpose of the lesson is not communicated clearly to pupils. Assessment information and prior learning experiences are not used well enough to ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' developmental needs. This means that the pace of learning slows because pupils do not have the skills to be successful. On occasions, pupils lose interest and become distracted. Teachers do not always review progress often enough to adjust tasks or identify barriers to pupils' learning.

The contribution of teaching assistants to pupils' learning continues to strengthen. In a guided reading session, visual resources were used very effectively to stimulate dialogue to promote English language skills and confidence. Wider benefits can be seen in the growing confidence of pupils to participate in lessons. Pupils who access the sensory circuit sessions have excellent opportunities to have fun while developing their coordination, concentration and confidence. The quality of the learning environment continues to improve to provide an exciting place to learn and helpful displays to support pupils' learning. Pupils are beginning to make use of this resource to increase their independence, although this is not consistent across classes.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to school and respond well to new initiatives that reward their progress. This approach has supported further improvement in levels of attendance. Pupils work well together when given the opportunity and enjoy healthy competition to demonstrate their skills. On occasions, pupils become unsettled when work lacks interest and does not match their personal and learning needs. Pupils respond enthusiastically to a wider range of experiences in the curriculum, additional after-school clubs, and visits linked to topic work.

The language ambassadors continue to welcome new arrivals and their families, and provide language support to help pupils settle. The new 'language of the month' initiative enables pupils to appreciate the languages spoken at the school and helps to promote cultural understanding and respect. Pupils proudly produce displays and enjoy teaching staff and pupils' greetings in their first language.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders have shown good strategic leadership since the previous visit to drive improvement in the delivery of phonics and reading. High quality training for all staff has raised expectations. Good input from external consultants has supported key priorities and helped to monitor the impact of training. The headteacher has been successful in identifying local schools for good practice visits and joint planning to build capacity across the school. Leaders have adopted a new and rigorous approach to quality assurance to evaluate key features of teaching and learning. As a result,

individual teachers receive specific feedback based on lesson observation, book and planning scrutiny, views from pupils and an evaluation of the classroom learning environment. Leaders are acutely aware that the next step is for teachers to use this information with appropriate support to strengthen teaching quality and consistency, and to ensure that all pupils have access to good quality learning experiences.

The headteacher is passionate about his vision for the school. He is ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher and literacy leader, who continue to hone their leadership and management skills. Opportunities to conduct a range of quality assurance activities with the headteacher and school adviser have empowered them to lead training and contribute more effectively to self-evaluation. Changes in subject leadership in mathematics have limited developments in recent months, although plans are advanced to remedy this.

The curriculum is developing well to provide a broad, balanced and creative experience for pupils, although planning to secure the progression of reading, writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum is not fully embedded. Links with parents and carers are growing to support pupils' learning. An encouraging development is the introduction of parent language ambassadors.

Effective leadership by the lead teacher for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has strengthened the identification of individual needs. Provision is carefully mapped and additional support monitored. The performance management of teaching assistants has provided a good focus for identifying training needs to meet the diverse needs of pupils.

Members of the governing body continue to make planned visits to gather first-hand evidence of provision and to fulfil duties with regard to safeguarding. Good support is given to the headteacher in managing business linked to premise developments to ensure a sustained and strong focus on school improvement.

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

External support

External advisers and subject consultant input has been used effectively. The monitoring of intervention programmes has helped to evaluate progress and refine training. Targeted work in mathematics has supported the identification of pupils'

specific needs to inform planning. Whole-staff training on meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language has led to a wider range of teaching strategies and resources. Staff have identified specific objectives to develop their practice.