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22 March 2012

Mrs Bellinger
Headteacher
Plover Primary School
Coniston Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN2 6JL

Dear Mrs Bellinger

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Plover Primary School

Following my visit with Brenda McIntosh, additional inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 – inadequate

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 Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye

Additional inspector

January 2012



Annex

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

- Improve the attainment and progress pupils make in English by:
 - ensuring a common approach throughout the school to the teaching of handwriting and presentation of work
 - enabling pupils to produce quality written work in all subjects
 - building on the good habits of speaking and listening that pupils develop when in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that all lessons are at least good so that pupils make better progress and reach higher standards in all year groups by:
 - using available information about pupils' capabilities and previous progress in order to plan lessons that move at a good pace and keep pupils engaged
 - ensuring that teachers' marking is thorough and tells pupils how to improve
 - making sure that all pupils learn how to work independently and do not rely entirely on adult support.
- Ensure that all leaders adopt and develop the requisite skills so that they can provide a suitable system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision so that they can measure and demonstrate improvements in pupils' progress.
- Ensure that attendance improves in all year groups and that all pupils understand the importance of coming to school regularly.
- Ensure that the governing body takes a stronger role in promoting and planning community cohesion so that it is a common element throughout the school.

Special measures: monitoring of Plover Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 March 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised school documentation and pupils' work and met with staff and pupils. The team observed 12 lessons, and meetings were held with the executive headteacher and senior staff, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since becoming subject to special measures in November 2011, an executive headteacher has been appointed to lead the school through the immediate future. Three additional governors and one new parent governor have joined the governing body. One teacher has left the school and one teacher is on maternity leave currently. The deputy headteacher now has a class teaching commitment and one part-time teacher is working full time. A new subject leader for English has been appointed. The governing body is consulting with the local authority about plans for the future leadership of the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In recent years, attainment in both English and mathematics has been low with assessment data showing that pupils make the slowest progress in English. As a result of this legacy of slow progress over time, pupils' attainment in English is still significantly lower than that of most pupils nationally.

Since becoming subject to special measures, the Year 6 classes have been divided to provide three smaller classes so that work can be matched more closely to their different needs. In the younger classes, there is now more regular attention to the teaching of spelling and this is starting to have a positive impact. Nevertheless, the pace of learning in most lessons is still not fast enough for pupils to make up for their slow progress in the past.

Improving assessment systems mean that school leaders have a clearer view of how well pupils are performing. Progress data for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now being collected and used to identify rates of progress in different classes and in different areas of learning. The most up-to-date tracking data show that the rate of pupils' progress in reading and writing across Key Stage 1 has started to improve. However, while teachers are using a more detailed and consistent approach to the planning of lessons and to identify different learning tasks for different groups, assessment information is not being used routinely to plan effectively for the next steps in pupils' learning. Consequently, across the school, and particularly in Key Stage 2, lessons do not build on pupils' prior

learning consistently and this means that the rate of progress for many pupils remains too slow.

The school is now implementing a whole-school approach to the teaching of handwriting. However, the quality and presentation of written work still varies significantly between classes and from day-to-day within classes. In many cases, pupils' written work is poorly presented and incomplete with too little evidence of how teachers' input is helping them to improve.

Teachers' planning now identifies more time and opportunity for pupils to write at length for a range of purposes across the curriculum. During the monitoring inspection, some creative writing based around Greek myths provided an example of how pupils are being inspired to develop an interest in, and enjoyment of, literature and writing. Writing in science books and topic work shows that pupils are being given time to practise different writing styles and techniques. However, the underdeveloped approach to the use of assessment information means that pupils are not building progressively on previously taught skills and, as a result, there remain significant gaps in their understanding.

In lessons, through assemblies and school council meetings, pupils are encouraged to share and discuss their ideas. Effective modelling of good speaking and listening by teachers and support staff is also helping pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. While pupils listen well and readily engage in small group and partner discussions, many are not confident to speak in larger group situations.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve the attainment and progress pupils make in English – inadequate.

The quality of teaching

School leaders have taken action to monitor and evaluate teaching and provide feedback to teachers about how to improve. Information from the evaluation of teaching is used to identify priorities for weekly staff-training sessions.

There is now more teaching that is satisfactory or better than at the time of the November 2011 inspection. During this monitoring inspection, some examples of good teaching were seen. Nevertheless, some inadequate teaching remains and there is still not enough good teaching and this means that the rate of progress for too many pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, is not fast enough.

Where teaching is good, pupils are supported by all adults to develop independence in their learning. In one effective English lesson, for example, pupils sequenced and described a series of events that had taken place during a school trip. This meaningful activity drew on their first-hand experience and there was a lot of helpful discussion as pupils worked



together to make choices about appropriate words to use in order to record events in a chronological manner. In this lesson, most pupils made good progress because the teacher's planning was focused on the small steps in learning that build progressively on pupils' current knowledge and understanding. Pupils responded well because the activity required them to cooperate, make decisions and reflect on what they already knew in order to create questions and make decisions.

In most classes, teachers' use of technology, notably the interactive whiteboard, helps to keep pupils interested in their lessons. Teamwork between teachers and other staff is strong and support for hearing impaired pupils means that they are able to take a full and active part in lessons.

In too many cases, however, teachers spend too much time on classroom tasks that require a lot of adult support or are not focused on pupils' learning needs. This is because teachers are not using assessment information routinely to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils in the class. As a result, pupils need a lot of adult guidance to help them through tasks that they do not really understand or they spend too long on activities that are too easy for them. This lack of precision in the use of assessment information means that time in many lessons is not as well used as it could be. Consequently, the pace of learning is still too slow.

While effective steps have been taken to improve teachers' planning so that it is consistent across the school, the approach to marking pupils' work is still a significant weakness. Most work is marked regularly but pupils do not get clear information about how well they are doing or about what they need to do in order to improve their work. The monitoring of written work in books has not been undertaken with sufficient rigour in order to drive forward the higher expectations of teaching that school leaders are now bringing to their role.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that all lessons are at least good so that pupils make better progress and reach higher standards in all year groups – inadequate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attendance has improved and, in the current year so far, is in line with the level of attendance found in most schools. This improvement has been brought about largely by the school's swift attention to the tightening up of routines and procedures. Parents and carers are contacted quickly if there are any concerns about punctuality or attendance. Pupils are aware that attendance has improved and speak in an informed way about the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Around the school, the many posters and reminders about attending school on time every day help to reinforce this understanding. School leaders are

now paying more attention to the attendance of different groups and the link between poor attendance and low attainment. A small number of pupils still do not come to school often enough.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is generally good. The school has ensured that all staff follow proper procedures with regard to health and safety and safeguarding. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and report that behaviour in school is usually calm, orderly and free from any bullying. They get on well with each other at break times and enjoy the different activities on offer at the before- and after-school club.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that attendance improves in all year groups and that all pupils understand the importance of coming to school regularly – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher took up her post in January 2012 and has been quick to establish roles and responsibilities at all levels across the school. As a result, there is a clear and welcomed sense of accountability and a shared drive to improve provision and outcomes for pupils. There is now a regular routine for the monitoring of teachers' work. The teaching of English and mathematics has been observed in all classes. Observations of teaching are carried out by the executive headteacher and other senior leaders, often jointly, so that the higher expectations of teaching are consistent across the leadership team. This paired monitoring work is helping less experienced school leaders to sharpen their evaluative and analytical skills. Teachers now receive precise feedback about how to improve their teaching and the weekly staff training sessions reinforce the key messages needed for school improvement. Routines for the monitoring of work in books are less well established and, in many classes, pupils' written work does not show sufficient signs of improvement over time.

Assessment systems have been strengthened so that there is now more regular information about how much progress pupils are making. However, assessments are still not precise enough and this means some teachers are unsure about how to plan for next steps in learning. School leaders are aware of this and the school development plan is focused, rightly, on making sure all staff are trained properly to use the newly introduced assessment procedures with accuracy and confidence.

Strategic planning for school improvement is well organised. The headteacher produces brief weekly evaluations of progress against key development targets and this short and succinct format is helping to keep everyone focused on what has already been achieved and the immediate priorities.

Governance of the school has been strengthened. The recruitment of three additional governors has brought valuable experience to the governing body. The requirement, at the time of the last inspection, to produce and act upon a community cohesion action plan has been met.

Members of the governing body now bring an increased level of challenge to their role as a critical friend. This is because they have taken steps to improve their awareness and understanding of the information available to them. Members of the governing body have undertaken training in order to help them interrogate school performance data. A governors' strategic group meets regularly to check progress against school development targets. These actions are helping governors to evaluate the work of the school in a more informed way and mean that school self-evaluation is accurate and development planning is focused on school improvement more sharply.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that all leaders adopt and develop the requisite skills so that they can provide a suitable system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision so that they can measure and demonstrate improvements in pupils' progress – satisfactory.
- Ensure that the governing body takes a stronger role in promoting and planning community cohesion so that it is a common element throughout the school – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action was evaluated by Ofsted and approved in January 2012. It is a clear and comprehensive statement that identifies appropriate support and necessary actions. It is fit for purpose. Action to improve and strengthen the leadership of the school has been swift and effective and this is already having a positive impact. The support provided by the local authority to assist the work of the newly appointed subject leader for literacy and to raise attainment in English has not been successful in moving the school forward quickly enough in this area. The local authority now has plans to attend to this with urgency.