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25 May 2012

Mrs Eggleton  
Headteacher  
Riverside Junior School  
Holme Street  
Hebden Bridge  
West Yorkshire  
HX7 8EE

Dear Mrs Eggleton

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Riverside Junior School**

Following my visit with Peter McKay, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 May 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 January 2012. 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 and Young People's Services for Calderdale.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

January 2012



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012**

- Improve the achievement of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs by:
  - developing a range of interventions to support pupils who have additional needs
  - training staff in how to support these pupils in small group intervention work and when working with them on a one-to-one basis
  - providing effective support for those pupils who arrive at the school with rudimentary reading skills
  - carefully tracking the progress of pupils and intervening promptly whenever any underachievement is detected
  - improving the quality of record keeping and target-setting so that staff are clear what the pupils need to achieve and how best to support them in class.
  
- Improve achievement in writing by:
  - ensuring there is sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to write extended texts.
  
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching across the school by:
  - improving the quality of feedback to pupils so they are clear about what they need to do to improve their work
  - reducing the amount of time teachers spend giving long explanations at the expense of pupils working independently
  - ensuring teachers use assessment data effectively to plan work that matches pupils' abilities.
  - sharing more widely the good practice that currently exists in the school.
  
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels drive and sustain improvements by:
  - monitoring the progress of groups of pupils over time and taking prompt action to prevent any underachievement
  - empowering staff to use assessment data effectively to challenge pupils and ensure they receive the support they need
  - refining the current system of meetings with teachers so that there is a rigorous system of holding them to account for the progress of pupils in their classes.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Riverside Junior School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 May 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, pupils, a representative from the local authority and a small group of parents. They observed nine teachers in nine lessons in addition to other shorter observations of learning activities. The majority of observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or the National Leader in Education.

#### **Context**

Since the school's previous inspection there have been no changes in teaching staff. The school is in the process of recruiting a deputy headteacher, a post that has been vacant since summer 2011. Since March a National Leader in Education from a neighbouring authority has been providing support to the school's leadership through regular visits and by sharing the expertise of staff in the support school.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

During observations of pupils' learning during this monitoring inspection, some early signs of improvement were noted in the progress pupils are making in lessons. For example, pupils are responding well to the increasing opportunities provided for them to develop and improve their writing skills. Some pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their writing and that effective planning and redrafting of their work can help them to do this. Pupils also enjoy the stimulus provided at the start of the 'cold writing' sessions, resulting in some imaginative and creative pieces of work. While there is still some way to go before all pupils achieve their full potential in writing, particularly at the higher Level 5, the school has made a positive start in this area for improvement. It recognises that pupils' creativity and free thinking is not complemented by more accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition, pupils' confident and articulate speaking skills are not always accompanied by a respectful ability to listen to others and take everyone's views into account.

The groundwork has been set for improving the provision for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs, including changes to the leadership of this aspect of the school's work, through external support and expertise. The effect of this has yet to have a measurable impact on pupils' rates of progress, as it is also dependent on the quality and consistency of teaching. However, a representative group of parents who met with the lead inspector expressed their views that, 'things are beginning to improve'. They particularly welcome the introduction of the 'homework book' that promotes better communication between home and school, for example. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs were observed making similar progress to their peers during

lessons. There is an improving focus on ensuring that their needs are taken into account, although the school recognises that the quality of individual education plans and teachers' use of these when planning learning activities remain variable.

The proportion of pupils who achieve age-related expectations in English and mathematics by the time they leave Riverside has traditionally been at or above the national average and this remains the case. However, taking into account their attainment on entry to the school, leaders understand that expectations should be higher, particularly for the proportion of pupils who are capable of reaching the higher Level 5 and beyond. Although recent assessments and inspection evidence indicate a slight rise in the number of pupils achieving higher levels in English and mathematics, writing remains relatively weaker than reading as a result of past underachievement in this area.

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

- Improve the achievement of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs – satisfactory
- Improve achievement in writing – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving slowly, although too much inconsistency remains. For example, lessons by the same teachers have been judged differently at various points when observed by senior leaders. This suggests that improvements are currently too fragile to be sustained over time without further training and development, although most teachers are responding positively to these opportunities to develop their skills.

The current general profile of satisfactory teaching is not strong enough to bring about more-rapid improvement in pupils' rates of progress. Teachers are insecure in their use of assessment information to plan lessons that fully meet the needs of all pupils, with sufficient challenge and differentiated questioning to check their understanding and move their learning on. Some good practice in the quality of teachers' marking to provide effective feedback and challenge is developing but is not evident across the whole school. Teachers have only recently begun to understand fully their accountability for the progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As a result, the writing of individual education plans and incorporation of these into lesson planning is at an early stage.

Teachers are making efforts to improve the learning environment in and around their classroom, through displays of pupils' work and their organisation of learning areas and resources. In areas of the school or classrooms that appear 'tired' or less organised and looked after, there is less stimulus for pupils to value or improve their own work or general tidiness.

Good relationships exist in classrooms and pupils generally enjoy their lessons. Teachers are making good efforts to improve the balance between how much they talk and pupils' involvement in collaborative and independent work. Where this is effective, pupils make better progress because expectations of them are raised and teaching ensures that they are focused on tasks that challenge their thinking and raise their levels of understanding. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on rotation, work was well matched to pupils' different ability levels and the teacher provided good oral and written feedback through questioning and marking. When teachers plan and manage group or class discussions skilfully and promote the importance of listening skills, this has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and personal development.

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

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching across the school – satisfactory

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The evidence from this visit concurs with the previous inspection findings that pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall and better at structured times such as during lessons. There have been improvements in the sometimes over-boisterous behaviour during lunchtime play that was observed previously, as a result of better arrangements for additional adults to be involved in games and activities to support pupils in the playground. During this visit inspectors noted that when some pupils were having lunch, their raised voices meant that noise levels were particularly high and this made sociable conversation between other pupils or adults very difficult. On occasions, pupils do not apply their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe from potential accidents if they run in the dining hall or jump down more than one stair at a time.

The school is committed to ensuring that pupils' behaviour continues to improve to become consistently good or better. A small minority of pupils need and are receiving additional support to manage their behaviour. The appointment of a learning mentor has been made with effect from September, to develop further the school's provision in meeting pupils' social and emotional needs to support better learning. Attendance is just above average. Most pupils attend regularly and the school monitors and follows up any attendance or punctuality issues.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Despite the potential difficulty of a gap in leadership at senior level, the headteacher and governing body have acted positively in response to the previous inspection findings. The school is currently recruiting for the post of deputy headteacher and is taking decisive action to tackle underperformance. The skills of key subject leaders are developing through training and support from local authority consultants and staff from the linked national support school.

An audit of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has identified accurately where issues remain and what actions must be taken to remedy these. Expectations are raised and staff are beginning to be held to account for the progress pupils make. Self-evaluation is accurate and the monitoring of teaching identifies the common issues for improvement that will form the next stage of the school's action plans in this aspect.

The school's improvement plans are appropriately focused on the key priorities and mostly include success criteria by which the impact of the school's actions can be measured. There is not always a clear and succinct link between different action plans, for example, between the local authority's and those of the school. To improve clarity and whole-staff ownership of the key actions and timescales, leaders intend to review these at the start of next term. A 'visioning day' is planned for the governing body to include an opportunity for governors to apply their developing knowledge of achievement data to the analysis of the 2012 Key Stage 2 results when these are received.

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

- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels drive and sustain improvements – satisfactory

### **External support**

The local authority's statement of action was examined and found to be fit for purpose. Its action plans are focused appropriately on the priorities for improvement and the appointment of an additional governor has added to the improving capacity and expertise of governance. The school is benefiting from the 'National Leaders in Education' initiative, a partnership brokered by the local authority with Ashlands Primary School. It is also making good use of the expertise provided by the school's effectiveness officer and other local authority consultants. The authority is committed to continuous support of the school on its journey of improvement, despite the challenges posed by changes to staffing and funding arrangements from September 2012.