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12 July 2012

Mrs H. Bellinger
Headteacher
Plover Primary School
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Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN2 6JL

Dear Mrs Bellinger

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Plover Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 July 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 second 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with staff and pupils. Nine lessons taught by nine different teachers were observed, and meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior staff, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, two temporary teachers have been appointed in order to cover for maternity related absence. In addition, a teacher has been seconded from a local school to act as a consultant at Plover Primary until the end of the summer term 2012. At the time of this monitoring inspection, the governing body was making preparations to appoint a permanent headteacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's tracking data and evidence from lesson observations during this monitoring inspection indicates that the progress of all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, has accelerated and attainment has improved.

The 2012 unvalidated test results for Year 6 pupils show that attainment in English and mathematics is higher than that seen in the past two years. Attainment in mathematics is now much closer to age-related expectations. However, while showing improvement from recent years, pupils' attainment in English, particularly for the more-able pupils, is still lower than that found in most schools.

The school now analyses pupils' progress and performance data in more detailed and systematic ways. School leaders are able to identify trends, track the progress of groups, and to evaluate the impact of any extra support that is being put in place.

The whole-school approach to handwriting is giving pupils more precise and regular guidance. This is helping them to take a greater pride in their work, as do the many displays that celebrate their achievements in writing. Nevertheless, while teachers' attention to the importance of good handwriting and clear presentation is having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and quality of work, some careless presentation is still evident at times.

Opportunities for writing at length have been extended and staff have been given training and guidance. The increased attention to writing across the curriculum and the introduction of independent writing books has brought benefits in all year groups. These new writing books have been instrumental in raising expectations and strengthening assessment

procedures. This is because consistent practice across the school makes it easier to plan for progression and to monitor progress over time. The teaching of writing is now better informed by on-going assessment and pupils know what is expected of them.

Lessons encourage pupils to share and discuss ideas. In many classes, teachers ask rather than tell, and this prompts pupils to contribute and be actively involved in discussions. In a plenary at the end of a Key Stage 2 lesson, pupils evaluated each other's learning as they talked with a partner about what they had learned and what they needed to do in the next lesson. This short and effective session required pupils to reflect on their own and each other's learning, to question and listen carefully, and then report back to the whole class. On another occasion, a brisk team game challenged Key Stage 1 pupils to use their recently acquired knowledge to devise and answer questions. Effective speaking and listening activities, such as these, help pupils to develop evaluative attitudes to their learning and allow teachers to assess their understanding and plan for next steps. However, in some lessons, lengthy teacher explanations dampen enthusiasm and, when this happens, pupils' progress is slower and on-going assessment is not as sharp.

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

- improve the attainment and progress pupils make in English - good

The quality of teaching

During this monitoring inspection, no inadequate teaching was observed. Examples of good teaching were seen and, where teaching was satisfactory, elements of good practice were present. However, while teaching has improved, there is still not enough good teaching in every year group to enable all pupils, and particularly the more-able, to make up for the slower progress of the past.

The recent attention to ensuring consistency in assessment means that teachers are better informed about what pupils currently know and what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Consequently, most lessons are now better matched to pupils' needs.

Where teaching is good, pupils display independence in their learning and are given time to discuss and reflect upon their understanding, and to assess their own work. Teachers use questions that prompt pupils to explain their thinking and allow staff to check for understanding and then refine or reshape tasks in lessons. In a well-planned English lesson, for example, pupils exercised and developed a range of literacy and communication skills, explaining their reasoning and challenging each other as they debated choices and decisions in order to create a balanced argument. They were able to tackle this with independence because the task built on their prior learning and brisk questioning by the teacher pushed their thinking on.

When teaching is less effective, there is still an over-reliance on adults because teachers do not organise time or resources with enough thought about pupils' needs. In some lessons, teachers talk too much, provide over-long explanations and do not use questions skilfully enough to engage all pupils.

There is an agreed marking policy and work in all subjects is checked regularly. The quality of marking in English has improved. Detailed comments that identify strengths and areas for further development guide pupils to respond in ways that improve their work. Marking in mathematics is not as helpful, focusing more on what is right or wrong rather than providing guidance or additional challenges. Pupils can explain how well they are doing and the introduction of simple targets informs them about what they need to do next. However, many are not sure about what they actually need to do in order to achieve their target.

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

- 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 – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The improvement in pupils' attendance seen at the first monitoring inspection has been maintained. Attendance overall, for the current year so far, is in line with the level of attendance found in most schools. The school's work with parents, carers, and health and welfare services has helped to reduce the number of persistent absentees, but a few cases remain. This means that in some year groups, specifically Year 3 and Year 6, attendance rates are still below average.

School leaders now analyse attendance data to identify patterns and monitor the impact of actions taken. Pupils agree that staff continue to give regular school attendance a high profile and can explain how the credit points for the school shop and other newly introduced rewards act as incentives to improve punctuality and attendance.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school continues to be generally good and pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils get on well together and, while there is some lively behaviour from time to time, instances of bullying are reported to be rare. All staff pay proper attention to health and safety matters and pupils understand school rules, expectations and procedures.

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

- 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 has strengthened the senior leadership team and has been successful in raising expectations. Across the school, leaders at all levels have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities and there is a greater sense of teamwork.

There are established routines and expectations for the monitoring of teaching and learning. Since the last monitoring inspection, and in addition to the on-going monitoring carried out by leaders, all teachers have had an opportunity to observe each other's practice.

The scrutiny of work in pupils' books is now part of regular practice and, together with information from lesson observations and data analysis at pupil progress meetings, is being used to provide staff with detailed feedback about the impact of their work. This is sharpening their focus on what they need to do to improve their teaching.

The governing body has continued to develop its confidence in holding the school to account. An increased awareness of their role means that not only are members of the governing body better informed, but they now have a better understanding of what to do with the information they receive.

The community cohesion action plan, which was in place at the time of the first monitoring inspection, is being implemented. Recent actions include a successful bid for grant funding to launch and run an International Club which will serve to celebrate the cultural mix of the locality and wider world.

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

- 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 – good
- ensure that the all the members of the governing body take a stronger role in promoting and planning community cohesion so that it is a common element throughout the school - satisfactory

External support

The support from the local authority is well matched to the school's needs. The work of the executive headteacher, local authority consultant and, more recently, a seconded teacher, is having a positive impact on improving teaching and raising attainment.