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14 September 2012

Mrs Jane Walker
Anston Brook Primary School
Ryton Road
North Anston
Sheffield
S25 4DN

Dear Mrs Walker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Anston Brook Primary School

Following my visit with Jennifer Lawrence, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time: the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Rotherham and as below.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress accelerates and attainment rises by ensuring that:
 - the requirements of the national curriculum in English and mathematics are fully implemented so that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are comprehensively and progressively developed
 - work is well matched to the needs and prior attainment of all groups of pupils and is appropriately challenging for all
 - marking and feedback are regular and provide clear information for pupils on how well they are doing and how to improve their work so that they make swifter progress and reach their targets.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all leaders develop the range of knowledge and skills necessary to play a full role in monitoring the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility and in taking successful action to bring about improvement
 - all information about the effectiveness of the school, including how pupils are progressing, is analysed rigorously in order to identify what actions need to be taken to bring about improvement and which are then swiftly implemented
 - monitoring activities focus on assessing the impact of action taken to improve pupils' outcomes.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 September 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the vice-chair of the governing body, and a consultant headteacher and an evaluation officer from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher retired following the last inspection. An executive headteacher from a neighbouring school was appointed at the end of May 2012. An acting deputy headteacher was in post for the summer term. In September 2012, a newly appointed head of school took up post and new coordinators were appointed for mathematics, English, information and communication technology (ICT), and special educational needs.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In 2012, the schools' assessments indicate that the good achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the time of the previous inspection has been sustained. This was confirmed by inspectors' observations of children's good progress, engagement and enjoyment in learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

In 2012, the majority of pupils in Year 1 met the required standard in the new national screening check of their knowledge of letters and sounds. In 2012, teacher assessment at Key Stage 1 shows that Year 2 pupils had higher attainment in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. However, this reflects the higher attainment by these pupils at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, rather than their more rapid progress during Key Stage 1. The evidence of improved progress in lessons at Key Stage 1 is limited. For example, higher ability pupils were enthusiastic about their writing and progressed well in composing a sequence of sentences. However, average and lower ability pupils sometimes found tasks too hard when work was not sufficiently well matched to their academic or developmental needs.

The unvalidated Key Stage 2 results show that pupils made improved progress, especially in mathematics. All pupils made two levels of progress in mathematics from their starting point at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils also made improved progress in English. However the wide gap between pupils' attainment in English and mathematics remained. In 2012, pupils attained much higher results in mathematics than English, reversing the position of the previous year. The improvement in mathematics was due in part to extensive additional support for pupils in Year 6. There are early signs that learning is improving at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as pupils in lessons respond positively to more consistent expectations and clearer explanations about and targets for what they should achieve. The school is in the

initial stage of assessing and tracking the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and of those eligible for free school meals.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching and the curriculum have begun to improve recently due to the clearer direction and guidance provided by the executive headteacher. The proportion of good teaching has not yet improved since the last inspection. However, a number of building blocks that have been put in place has begun to secure a greater level of consistency and purpose in teaching and learning across the school. Common approaches to the presentation of work and the use of targets for learning in lessons have raised pupils' expectations. The planning of lessons focuses more precisely on the specific objectives of pupils' learning which pupils find helpful. The assessment of pupils has started to become more rigorous and a programme of moderation with the partner school has begun to improve the reliability of assessment. Teachers have started to assess learning in English and mathematics on a daily basis and marking has begun to inform the planning of the next lesson more effectively. Marking more regularly and systematically identifies what has been achieved and the next steps for teaching and learning. This is in the early stage of implementation and younger pupils sometimes lack understanding of the teachers' written feedback.

In better teaching, the methodical approach to planning builds on prior learning and incrementally develops pupils' skills in English and mathematics from one lesson to the next. Teaching uses pupils' responses well to develop their confidence and improve their understanding. Where teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2 is not yet good, tasks are not sufficiently well matched to the range of needs in the class. Teachers have just begun to use a new and wider range of resources in English, mathematics and ICT to provide different activities for different groups. Teachers are keen to exploit the opportunities provided by these resources but are in the initial stages of working out how to best use them to create practical and stimulating activities to meet different needs. At present, some teaching lacks expertise and confidence in the use of questions and dialogue to develop learning. Teaching assistants have begun to take more responsibility for pupils' learning but do not frequently enough take a lead role in managing small group activities in the classroom.

The assessment and teaching of pupils with special educational needs or with particular difficulties with literacy remains under-developed. A new nurture group has been introduced but is not tackling pupils' literacy needs effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leaders have introduced new rewards and sanctions for behaviour and achievement which have been welcomed by pupils and have contributed to more positive attitudes by pupils and an improved climate for learning. The new gate and fence

have improved safety and punctuality and communicated higher expectations of pupils and their parents and carers about the importance of a prompt start to the school day. Attendance was higher in 2012 than in previous years.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, a strong vision for improvement, and clear priorities for action. These have been communicated effectively to staff and have resulted in a positive and shared commitment to improving the quality of learning and the standards of achievement. Pupils have responded well to the higher expectations of attendance and punctuality and the aspiration to 'reach for the stars'. Staff roles and responsibilities have been restructured with clearer responsibilities and accountabilities for teaching and support staff. The executive headteacher has accelerated the pace of change and recent actions have been implemented robustly and effectively. The school improvement plan lacks clear milestones for success and the targets in different plans have not been brought together with sufficient coherence.

The learning environment has improved. Educational resources have been comprehensively re-organised. The school is tidier and more orderly. The quality of classroom and corridor display has improved and is beginning to support learning more effectively, though displays do not yet include children's work. The school has adopted the curriculum model of the partner school to bring about full coverage of the curriculum. New curriculum resources provide a more systematic and unified approach and a more stimulating range of activity. In mathematics, a new scheme of work provides a common platform to implement new approaches to mental mathematics and calculation and more regular assessment of pupils' progress. In English, a new reading scheme provides a framework for developing the teaching of letters and sounds, reading skills and the reading for pleasure. Additional computers and educational software have increased the scope for pupils to work independently and to access a wider range of learning resources, both at school and home. The use of these resources is at the initial stage of implementation. The improved deployment of teaching assistants provides more coherent support in English and mathematics and increased support for physical education.

A more regular and systematic approach to professional development has effectively supported the introduction of new procedures and resources for teaching and learning. The well managed coaching arrangements with the partner school have improved the professional support and guidance for teaching and support staff and new school leaders. Teaching assistants have become more involved in professional development which has begun to improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

The new head of school has revised the systems for monitoring pupils' progress and they are about to be implemented. Plans are in place to introduce regular reviews of

pupils' progress with classroom teachers. The new coordinators of English and mathematics have produced realistic plans that are about to be implemented. The management of staff performance against the new plans and targets is at an early stage of implementation.

The governing body has played an influential role in implementing the new arrangements for leadership in the school. However, the monitoring of school improvement lacks rigour and urgency and the arrangements for reviewing progress are not formalised strongly enough. The governing body is aware of the need to develop a strategic plan for managing a future financial deficit.

External support

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The local authority has provided effective support in managing the change of leadership in the school, fostering the partnership with a neighbouring school and in providing on-going evaluative support. Local authority consultancy has effectively supported the development of subject co-ordinators new to their role. The partnership with the neighbouring primary school, including a common training day and a programme of regular meetings and coaching sessions, has played a valuable role in promoting the development of teaching and support staff and new school leaders.