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14 September 2012

Mrs Margaret Brownlee
Castleford Redhill Junior School
Stansfield Drive
Airedale
Castleford
West Yorkshire
WF10 3DB

Dear Mrs Brownlee

Special measures monitoring inspection of Castleford Redhill Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 September 2012, 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 Interim Executive Board, the Corporate Director Family Services for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching to raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress throughout the school in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - using assessment information to provide learning activities which challenge pupils of all abilities and are well matched to their needs
 - using questioning which reflects teachers' understanding of pupils' abilities
 - providing marking and feedback that tells pupils the next steps they need to take.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently.
- Raise attendance levels to at least the national average by:
 - making sure that pupils understand the importance of good attendance to achieving well
 - giving pupils ownership of their attendance through individual targets.
- Strengthen the quality and impact of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - all leaders and managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities that match their skills and the school's priorities, and for which they are held to account
 - there are improved systems for tracking pupils' achievement
 - teaching is monitored rigorously and weaker teaching eradicated
 - whole-school curriculum planning incorporates developing and using literacy and numeracy skills across subjects
 - planned programmes are in place for all areas of learning
 - the governing body develops an accurate knowledge and understanding of its roles and responsibilities quickly so that it provides support and challenge through regular monitoring, review and evaluation.

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

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including six part-lessons and a series of shorter lesson visits, scrutinised documents and met with headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils, the executive headteacher, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has left the school. Two existing teachers have been appointed jointly to the role of deputy headteacher on a job-share basis. They took up their posts at the beginning of the autumn term. A newly-qualified teacher, previously working in the school on a supply basis, has been appointed. A further temporary teacher has joined the school in response to the increasing number of pupils entering the school in Year 3. Following discussion with members of the governing body in June 2012, the local authority applied to the Department for Education to replace the governing body with an Interim Executive Board. The Interim Executive Board is now in place but has yet to meet formally. An associate headteacher, in post at the time of the inspection, completed her secondment to the school in July. From September 2012, an executive headteacher, from a different school, is providing three days of support each week.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Unvalidated data from the national curriculum tests and assessments in 2012 indicate that the proportion of pupils in Year 6 gaining the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics has risen significantly. However, despite this rise in attainment and the accelerated progress made by these pupils during their final year in the school, overall, the achievement of the majority remained inadequate due to the extent of their past underperformance. The greatest improvement was in relation to pupils' attainment in English. This reflects the positive impact of the whole-school focus on improving pupils' writing. In all current year groups, pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is as a result of more consistent teaching quality and the better use of assessment to ensure work matches more closely the ability of different groups of pupils in each class. Consequently, gaps are beginning to narrow between pupils' current and expected attainment relative to their starting points. Nevertheless, for older pupils in particular, some significant gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding remain. For example, a significant proportion lack confidence in aspects of mathematics, such as basic calculation skills and the recall of number facts. Interventions are increasingly being used to target gaps in pupils' knowledge or accelerate their progress further but much of this work is too recent to see the full impact on pupils'

progress overall. Pupils are more aware of their current level of working but are less clear about what it is they need to do to move to the next level.

The quality of teaching

Most teaching observed during the inspection was judged to require improvement. However, all lessons included a number of good features and no teaching was judged to be inadequate. Overall, the quality of teaching is improving. Assessment information is being used more effectively by teachers to inform their planning so that English and mathematics lessons, for example, routinely incorporate tasks and activities that are pitched at different levels. Weekly joint planning sessions, supported by senior leaders, are enabling teachers to work more closely together. This sharing of ideas and good practice is helping to embed new approaches and improve the consistency and quality of planning. Teachers are also making more effective use of day-to-day assessment to adjust their planning for the next lesson and using questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding. All lessons feature clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils, but the use of 'success criteria' or 'steps to success' to support pupils' learning is not consistent in all classes. All classrooms feature working walls for literacy and numeracy, but again, the effectiveness with which these are being used as a resource to support pupils' learning is variable. However, teachers are using tasks that are engaging pupils more effectively, such as more frequent opportunities for collaborative learning, paired discussion or timed challenges. Increasingly, strategies such as the use of speaking and listening before writing and effective teacher modelling are helping pupils to make better progress in their independent work. While no teaching was inadequate, several weaker elements of practice were observed. These included: not addressing pupils' misconceptions fully; insufficiently explicit teaching to ensure all pupils could embark confidently on independent work; a predominance of teacher talk resulting in more limited time for pupils to work independently; and periods of time where pupils were passive while the teacher did all the work! There was little evidence of teachers referring to pupils' targets in any lessons observed other than the nurture group.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

School records and pupils' views confirm that behaviour, both in lessons and in the playground, is improving. There is greater clarity about expectations and pupils have a better understanding of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. They are confident that incidents are dealt with more firmly and consistently. The introduction of a play worker at lunchtime from the start of the autumn term is already recognised by pupils as making a real difference to playground behaviour. Relationships in classrooms are mostly positive and praise is being used more regularly to reward pupils' good contributions to learning or positive behaviour. Nevertheless, pupils interviewed still raised concerns about a very small minority of pupils in their respective classes who caused low-level disruption resulting in lost

learning time. During the inspection, while many pupils observed were keen to complete tasks set, others were poorly motivated when it came to independent work and their productivity was low. A few pupils also commented that in paired or group some of their peers would choose to 'sit back' while others did the work!

The school has taken a firm stance on the importance of good attendance as a key to improving achievement. Systems to monitor attendance have been developed and absence is being more rigorously followed up. As a result attendance overall has improved and there has been a significant reduction in the number of pupils classed as persistent absentees.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has a realistic view of the progress the school has made since the previous inspection and what is still to be done. Clear plans are in place to tackle the school's weaknesses in a systematic and sustainable way, but in a few instances, targets to measure the impact of actions taken lack sharpness. The headteacher has secured the commitment of all staff to supporting the school's improvement and rightly placed a strong focus on their professional development, making good use of external expertise to enhance in-house skills. The impact of this work is beginning to be seen in the improvements to teaching quality, classroom support and pupil outcomes.

Newly-appointed senior leaders are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities and are beginning to contribute to leading improvement in their specific areas. Work to enhance the role of middle leaders is still at a very early stage of development. It is too soon to gauge the impact of the newly-established Interim Executive Board. A new system to track pupils' progress has been introduced enabling leaders and staff to monitor current attainment against pupil targets more easily. This system, informed by increasingly regular and accurate assessment, is being used more effectively as a tool to inform teachers' planning and identify individual pupils who require additional intervention. The curriculum has been reviewed and developed to ensure all teachers have a clear understanding of the different skills to be taught in each subject; class themes are encouraging teachers to make links between different areas in the curriculum. There are early signs that this new curriculum is extending the opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects while increasingly promoting their enjoyment and engagement. Carefully tailored provision, including multi-agency working where appropriate, is helping to improve the achievement and well-being of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. School staff are also working hard to establish closer links with parents and carers to better support pupils' individual academic and pastoral needs.

External support

The local authority statement of action was evaluated and judged fit for purpose. External expertise and financial resources provided by the local authority to increase staffing are helping the school to make progress, particularly in tackling behaviour and attendance issues. The school has also benefitted from further funding to reduce class sizes in Years 3 and 4. Steps have been taken to address weaknesses in governance and useful partnerships have been brokered to help build capacity and staff expertise within the school. Local authority professional development programmes are being used to support staff new to teaching and those recently appointed to senior leadership roles. Some actions are very recent, such as the appointment of an executive headteacher and, consequently, it is too soon to judge their contribution to the school's improvement.