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26 October 2012

Mrs D Glover
Headteacher
Popleton Road Primary School
Popleton Road
York
North Yorkshire
YO26 4UP

Dear Mrs Glover

Special measures monitoring inspection of Popleton Road Primary School

Following my visit with Lynne Davies, additional inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 October 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 May 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's Services for the City of York and as below.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- By July 2013, improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good, and raise attainment to be at least in line with national averages by:
 - ensuring expectations are consistently high in all classes and for all pupils
 - providing activities and tasks that are challenging enough for pupils of all abilities
 - increasing the pace of learning, providing stimulating activities and avoiding lengthy introductions to lessons so that pupils maintain their interest and engage actively in their learning
 - using day-to-day assessments to adapt teachers' planning to meet pupils' learning needs
 - marking pupils' work consistently and clearly to identify strengths and areas for improvement, showing pupils how to improve their work and giving time for them to respond to feedback
 - deploying all teaching assistants effectively
 - ensuring teachers plan more purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their skills in writing, calculation and mathematics skills across the curriculum.

- Improve the effectiveness with which leaders and managers monitor teachers' performance and the learning and progress of pupils by:
 - establishing a more rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation of teachers' lesson planning
 - checking the progress that different groups of pupils are making by undertaking regular scrutiny of their workbooks and a termly analysis of assessment information
 - ensuring the assessments used to monitor pupils' progress are accurate
 - focusing lesson observations on the impact that teaching has on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, and reflecting this emphasis in feedback to teachers
 - using the outcomes of monitoring to secure improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement
 - setting challenging targets, so an increasing proportion of pupils make or exceed two sub-levels of progress each year in reading, writing and mathematics
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so they can effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 October 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the partner headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, teachers, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection the school has made additional appointments to the leadership team. Three teachers have left the school. A partner headteacher has been working full time at the school since July 2012.

Achievement of pupils at the school

There are clear signs of pupils' achievement getting better in Key Stage 1 and 2. Results show a marked improvement so that standards are now in line with national averages with the exception of mathematics in Key Stage 2. Teachers are more accurate in checking pupils' progress. Leaders can show progress is improving but there are still gaps. Different groups of pupils make different rates of progress across the school. Boys do not always do as well as girls. Pupils' progress in mathematics does not match the progress they make in English.

In lessons, pupils continue to be respectful, listen to their teacher and to each other. They are keen to do well. They now have more interesting activities to do in lessons. This helps them to keep their interest going throughout the lesson. Pupils put their hands up eagerly to answer questions and they usually work hard. The number of lessons in which they make good progress is increasing especially when the teacher expects a lot from them.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has been strengthened by new appointments. The lengthy introductions described in the previous inspection report have largely disappeared. Teachers are making sure the tasks they give to pupils have the right level of challenge. The best example of this is when teachers give groups of pupils' different tasks to start off the lesson. This is not completely right yet because teachers do not always make sure the work is stretching enough for each individual. This means that some pupils, especially those who are more-able, do not make as much progress as they should.

Teachers have also worked on raising their expectations of pupils and some are doing this really well. There are still times when pupils sit and wait if they have finished their work. The pace of learning in most classes is brisk most of the time but it slows when pupils are asked to copy out the aims for the lesson, especially if they

find writing difficult. Teaching assistants are getting better at asking the right questions and avoiding helping pupils too much. This helps pupils to think for themselves.

Pupils' writing has improved. Teachers make better use of opportunities for pupils to practice their skills in all subjects. For example, pupils in Year 4 were confidently using adverbs when they were evaluating their clay carvings of Egyptian cartouches. The same improvement is not there in mathematics. Teachers have got better at giving pupils real life problems to solve but these are not always interesting and do not capture pupils' interest or enthusiasm. This is partly why pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in English.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to get on well together. They enjoy playing together and try hard to be good friends. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance has improved so that it is now above the national average. There are very few instances of bullying. Pupils say when it does occasionally happen, it is name-calling about their appearance or about not being 'clever'. They feel confident and safe in reporting things that happen to an adult and feel secure that something will be done to help them.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

New appointments have strengthened the leadership of the school. The determined headteacher has wasted no time in focusing the team's attention on improving teaching. Senior leaders have been supported effectively by a partner headteacher in putting in place a strong system to regularly check the quality of lessons and progress pupils make. When they see that teaching is not good enough they take action quickly. There is still a stubborn element of teaching which is not good enough and occasionally inadequate. Leaders have improved the way teaching success is rewarded but there are weaknesses in the system because it allows teachers to be rewarded when it is not merited.

The governing body has been strengthened by new appointments. Recent training and restructuring is giving governors a clearer idea of what they need to do to challenge and support the school in maintaining the momentum of improvement. The school is in the early stages of considering if becoming an academy might help improve the school.

External support

External support, including that from the local authority and the partner headteacher has been strong. Support has been well judged and tailored to exactly what the school needs to support its improvement. For example, the work the local authority

has done in helping the literacy leader to improve writing has resulted in pupils producing creative and imaginative work. The statement of action prepared by the local authority is thorough, clear and helpful. It offers helpful guidance to leaders as well as making expectations clear.