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12 November 2012

Mrs Nicola Brogan
Headteacher
Woodland Community Primary School
Regent Street
Heywood
Lancashire
OL10 3BX

Dear Mrs Brogan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Woodland Community Primary School

Following my visit with Lee Owston, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 November 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 – 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's Services for Rochdale.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress securely and rapidly by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and ensuring the quality of teaching is at least consistently good
 - making sure that teaching challenges pupils of all abilities appropriately
 - making sure that teaching has a sharp focus on its impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve behaviour so that it is at least satisfactory by making sure that teaching is consistent in stimulating pupils' interest and application.
- Improve pupils' prospects for their future success and economic well-being so that they are at least satisfactory by:
 - maintaining and embedding the recent improvements in attendance
 - improving pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Improve the effectiveness with which leaders and managers embed ambition and drive the school forward so that pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory by:
 - making sure that evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and leads to more rigorous tackling of shortcomings
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning with more rigour
 - making sure that forward planning provides the school with clear direction and a sharp concentration on priorities to bring about the rapid improvement that is necessary
 - making governance more effective in holding the school rigorously to account.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Woodland Community Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 November 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed 20 lessons or part lessons, all of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and the substantive deputy headteacher. They scrutinised documents and examined in detail pupils' books, the reading records for less-able pupils and spoke to leaders and managers about the progress in reading made by less-able pupils. Inspectors met with the headteacher, both deputy headteachers, pupils, a group of parents, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2012, there have been further changes to the staffing. Permanent appointments include a new Key Stage 1 leader and three Key Stage 1 staff; all teachers in Year 1 are new. A permanent appointment has been made to the new Nurture Group which has been established. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has been appointed as the second, temporary deputy headteacher, taking the place of the substantive deputy headteacher, who remains on secondment to another post within the authority. Major building work has been completed which has provided a new staffroom, nurture room and three additional classrooms, which are currently accommodating Year 1.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards across the school continue to rise and most pupils are making better progress. The greatest gains are evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. In the 2012 Key Stage 1 national assessments, there were significant improvements in comparison with previous years. For the first time in several years, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics were in line with the national figures. Very few reached the higher levels and boys did not do as well as their peers nationally or as well as the girls in the group. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, roughly half the cohort, attained more highly than their peers nationally but were still on average two terms behind their classmates. These figures are borne out by the pupils' work seen in lessons and in their books. They are writing more, are willing and able to 'have a go' at spelling unknown words using their knowledge of the sounds that letters make and can sustain concentration for longer periods of time. Pupils are reading more

often and more widely. The parents who spoke to inspectors reported that the greatest improvement they see is in the progress their children are making in reading. They are covering a wider range of topics in mathematics and there is a stronger focus on mastering key skills.

The results in the national assessments for the Early Years Foundation Stage showed significant improvement even on 2011's strong performance. The Early Years Foundation Stage is now a major strength within the school. 68% of children achieved a good level of development compared to 53% in 2011. This figure is well above the local authority figure and above the national. The school's work to promote early mastery of letters and sounds is paying dividends. 82% of children reached a good level of development in this aspect, up from 68% in 2011. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including in the Nursery, are making at least good progress. At the time of this inspection, early in the academic year, the most able Reception children were observed reading simple decodable books and writing simple phrases. Inspectors observed others looking at books for pleasure and 'reading' to themselves stories they knew off by heart. The school knows that it is critical that this momentum is maintained into Year 1, especially as all the teachers in Year 1 are new.

The results of the 2012 Key Stage 2 national tests and assessments were much improved on the exceptionally low position in 2011 but the school is now only back to the position it was in, in 2008. The results, even then, were significantly below national figures. Nevertheless, there has been much improvement. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected level in reading and in mathematics were broadly in line with the national figures but too few reached the expected level in writing and too few reached higher levels in general. Boys did not attain as well as their peers nationally. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did do as well as their peers nationally but not as well as their classmates.

Not all pupils are making consistent and sustained progress across Key Stage 2, and this is especially the case in Years 3 and 4. In particular, pupils with special educational needs and lower ability pupils are not making enough progress in reading. The school has had some remarkable success with pupils whose reading ages were three and four years below their birthday ages. These pupils have benefitted greatly from the school's 'Better Reading Partnership.' In contrast, too many pupils in the next group up, those with reading ages one to two years below birthday ages, have made minimal progress since April 2012 or earlier. When the inspectors looked at the books, reading bags and reading records for pupils in this group they found that most were not reading enough books either at school or at home and, specifically, were not reading enough decodable books. Most of the pupils are stuck where they are because they do not know all the different sound combinations that vowels make. The teaching they are currently receiving, the written work they have to do in lessons and the books they are given to read are not helping them to gain this crucial knowledge quickly enough.

Pupils' speech is improving as a direct result of the school's efforts to improve their sentence construction and the requirement for them to speak in complete sentences. There has been productive and good humoured staff development on this topic. Inspectors noted, however, that several staff still use grammatically incorrect speech when teaching or speaking to pupils.

Pupils are enjoying the new curriculum topics and the lively lessons that are now being planned.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection:

- raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

The profile of teaching across the school is not as good as it was at the last monitoring inspection. It is stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. During this inspection, more than half the teaching observed was good but too much remains that requires improvement to be good. The only outstanding teaching observed was in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The guided reading sessions observed in Key Stage 2 were not as strong as at the last monitoring visit. The two Year 6 classes are now split into three groups for English and mathematics with an additional, seconded, teacher employed to take the third group. Although the groups are now small, some momentum has been lost and not all pupils are making rapid enough progress. In Key Stage 2, pupils still do not read a wide enough range of children's literature or non-fiction books. They do not read enough books; the volume of books they are expected to read is too small. Teachers' knowledge of children's literature is not as good as it should be. Not all teachers understand the links between pupils reading widely, acquiring a good grasp of grammar and having ideas to write about.

In Key Stage 2, the teaching of mathematics is stronger than the teaching of writing. Some lower ability pupils are given writing tasks that are way beyond their skill level and not designed to help them improve specific weaknesses. The teaching of English and mathematics in Years 3 and 4 does not consistently build on the standards attained by pupils earlier.

The relatively large number of teachers new to the school and the introduction of new initiatives, such as the Nurture Group and the new curriculum planning, have had a destabilising effect. Not all staff are following agreed policies and some poor teaching habits have returned, for example, the use of worksheets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is now much improved. Inspectors observed no poor behaviour during this visit. Pupils are extremely polite, engage adults in conversation and are willing to work hard for their teachers. Parents who met with an inspector commented on the improvements in behaviour. The school has recently set up a Nurture Group and has employed a behaviour specialist to work with pupils at risk of exclusion and / or in need of support. This provision is too new to judge its impact but a number of questions were raised with the school about it. At the moment it is not clear what the criteria are for pupils accessing the group nor how the therapeutic work done within the group will be linked with their academic work.

Attendance continues to improve. It is currently 95.4% an improvement of 1.6 percentage points compared with that at the same point last year. Pupils and parents like the rewards for good attendance. Persistent absence is also decreasing. Punctuality is improving but at a slower pace than attendance. An incentive programme to encourage good punctuality has been established.

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

- improve behaviour so that it is at least satisfactory - good
- improve pupils' prospects for their future success and economic well-being – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there has been a further change to the senior leadership team. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is now the temporary second deputy headteacher. She is having a significant, positive impact on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has recognised that her sphere of influence needs to be extended to oversee and support the new teachers in Year 1 and ensure that the pupils there continue to make good progress.

The headteacher and substantive deputy headteacher continue to work extremely hard and to drive the school forward. The deputy headteacher has a large portfolio of work and has recently taken on oversight of special educational needs. Some key new initiatives have been implemented since September which have distracted senior leaders' attention from checking relentlessly that agreed policies are actually being carried out as required in classrooms. New staff have received intensive support at the beginning of the term but there remain gaps in their knowledge about expectations and requirements, for example, in teaching and the use of worksheets and about match of work to pupils' needs. There is some good practice in the school now which needs to be shared.

Senior leaders are still not following up quickly and robustly enough whether agreed policies are being carried out in practice in all classrooms, as in the case of reading

books for less-able pupils. This is leading to unevenness in the quality of teaching, there is too much that requires improvement, and lack of progress for some pupils.

Governance continues to be strong, evaluative and challenging. Stronger partnerships are developing between school and parents. Parents feel happier that the school is responsive to their concerns and questions.

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

- improve the effectiveness with which leaders and managers embed ambition and drive the school forward so that pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory
– satisfactory

External support

The local authority undertook an evaluation of the school in September 2012. Its report was accurate and perceptive. The authority continues to provide good support in respect of staffing issues.