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23 November 2012

Mrs Helen Bellinger
Headteacher
Plover Primary School
Coniston Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN2 6JL

Dear Mrs Bellinger

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Plover Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 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 third 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 - 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 Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Additional Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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 third monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with staff and pupils. The inspector observed 11 lessons, two of which were joint observations with the executive headteacher. Meetings were held with senior staff, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, a permanent headteacher has been appointed and is due to take up his post in January 2013. In addition, a temporary teacher has been appointed to cover for a Key Stage 1 teacher's maternity leave, and one new teaching assistant has joined the school. The Year 3 and Year 4 classes have been reorganised so that two Year 3 classes and two Year 4 classes operate in the mornings before reducing to three classes - one Year 3 class, one Year 3 and 4 class, and one Year 4 class - in the afternoons. This arrangement allows pupil numbers in each class to be lower in the mornings, and releases the deputy headteacher from class teaching duties in the afternoons.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The most recent end of Key Stage 2 test results show that attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 has improved. In 2012, the school met the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Nevertheless, achievement in English continues to lag behind that seen in mathematics. In addition, the gap between the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs and other pupils is wider than that seen in most schools.

The school's own records show that the progress of all pupils currently in the school is now being tracked more carefully. This information is being used to make sure that lessons are planned with greater precision. Pupils are now being given work that is right for their needs and pupils who have fallen behind are being given extra support to help them catch up.

Careful scrutiny of these records, together with observations made during this monitoring inspection, show that the progress of pupils in all year groups speeded up during the last two terms. In most year groups, the gap between attainment in English and mathematics is closing. School records of pupils' progress, and observations made during this monitoring inspection, show that pupils in the current Year 5, for example, are on track to achieve in line with age-related expectations, in both English and mathematics by the time they leave school. However, in the current Year 6, there is a significant group of pupils, mainly boys,



who are doing better in mathematics than they are in English. For these pupils, progress in English is still too slow.

The school's continued focus on improving pupils' handwriting is paying off. Pupils take a greater pride in their work. Rewards, such as the 'Pride of Plover' certificates, encourage them to do their best and to feel good about their achievements. Displays showing whole-school progression in writing and neatly framed examples of pupils' best work are given a high profile in the school's entrance hall. This sends a clear message that effort is valued and helps to set a standard for others to follow.

Opportunities for pupils to write at length have continued to increase. Teachers' improved planning and links between different subjects, often supported by trips, are being used to provide pupils with a real purpose for writing. Pupils now get better advice about how to edit and improve their writing. They are more involved in checking their own, and each other's, work, and take a greater interest in finding ways to make it better.

Most lessons allow time for pupils to talk about their ideas. In the best lessons, this helps teachers to find out what pupils already know and lets them adjust their teaching in order to build further on pupils' current understanding. However, in some lessons, progress is not as fast as it could be because teachers do not make the most of these speaking and listening opportunities. Sometimes, teachers talk for the pupils instead of prompting them to provide more detail in their explanations. At other times, teachers move on to new things too quickly and do not take the time to check how well pupils' understand the work that they are doing.

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

- Improve the attainment and progress pupils make in English - satisfactory

The quality of teaching

No inadequate teaching was observed during the monitoring visit. Teaching in all classes has improved and there is now more good teaching than was seen previously. Nevertheless, there is still too much teaching that requires improvement.

Teachers' planning follows the same format across the school and, because assessment is sharper, all teachers are able to plan lessons that provide the right level of challenge for pupils with different abilities. Nevertheless, when teachers do not check how well pupils are doing during lessons, these carefully planned activities are not as successful as they could be.

Marking, particularly in English, has improved. All teachers regularly check pupils' written work and provide detailed comments that help pupils to learn more. Since the last monitoring inspection, more has been done to involve pupils in checking their own work and in reviewing and setting their future targets. As a result, many pupils now know what they need to do next in order to improve their work. As seen previously, marking in mathematics



is regular and follows an agreed whole-school policy. However, when compared to the recent improvements seen in the marking of pupils' written work, the comments that teachers write in pupils' mathematics books are not as helpful.

The school has worked hard to develop pupils' independent learning skills and has made progress in this area. Pupils of all ages can talk about how they are taking more initiative in lessons. One Year 4 pupil explained that, 'we think more and have to make more decisions'. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils were able to find materials and resources to help them with their learning without any prompting from the teacher. Further up the school, pupils worked hard to explain to the teacher why their own method of solving a problem would work. Across the school, pupils display more enthusiasm and enjoyment when they are in class. However, in a few lessons, there is still too much teacher talk and use of unnecessary worksheets and this limits pupils' learning.

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 – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attendance is now in line with the level of attendance seen in most schools and nearly all pupils get to school on time. Displays and messages around the school, including a class attendance league table, demonstrate that school leaders are doing more to emphasise the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School leaders analyse attendance patterns and are starting to use this information to challenge any instances of poor attendance. It is clear that a few pupils still do not come to school often enough. In the last school year, for example, 23 pupils had attendance rates lower than 80%; the equivalent to missing at least one day a week all year. School leaders now plan to take a firmer stance against any unnecessary absence.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school continues to be generally good and pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils who find it difficult to control aspects of their behaviour are managed well by staff, so disruption to learning is rare.

In lessons and on the playground, pupils get on well together. They are taught about the importance of caring relationships and how to cope with difficult situations. Bullying continues to be uncommon and pupils say that, if it did happen, it would be stopped.

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 continued to place a high priority on improving senior and middle leadership at the school. Her hard work and commitment have brought positive results. Leadership meetings are now planned in a more organised way and leaders at all levels are growing in confidence in their roles.

Staff that hold key responsibilities have received leadership training and the systems for monitoring and improving everyone's work have been strengthened. All staff with leadership roles are required to make decisions and gather information to check how well planned actions have worked. The recent change to the way lessons about letter sounds are organised provides one example of how leaders, other than the headteacher, are leading others and taking informed action to help the school improve.

Subject leaders now have more opportunity to check the quality of lessons and work in pupils' books. They find out what is working well and what needs to be improved and report back to staff. All have an increased awareness of their role in driving forward whole-school improvement. This has created a sense of shared purpose that has lifted staff morale.

The governing body has continued to develop its ability to check the work of the school, to ask questions and to set targets that challenge it to improve.

The community cohesion action plan, which was in place at the time of previous monitoring inspections, is being implemented in a way that broadens pupils' horizons and promotes positive relations with others. The recently launched International Club, which provides practical activities that help pupils to learn about, and from, other cultures, is over-subscribed. A second club is due to start after Christmas.

The governing body has recently appointed a permanent headteacher who will take up his post at the beginning of the spring term. He has already made a number of visits to the school, including a visit during this monitoring inspection, and has observed teachers and pupils at work. During the spring term, the executive headteacher will continue to work with the school in order to assist the handover of responsibilities.

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 governing body takes 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 continues to be appropriate for the school's current needs. The recent local authority review, carried out in November, is detailed and makes clear recommendations about action to drive forward further improvements.

