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14 December 2012

Mrs Ruth Bessant
Headteacher
Wath Victoria Primary School
Sandymount Road
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 7AD

Dear Mrs Bessant

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wath Victoria Primary School

Following my visit with Janet Palmer, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since the 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 Interim Executive Board and the Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Services for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Annex

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

- Improve the achievement of all groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6 through raising their attainment and ensuring they consistently make at least good progress in English and mathematics by:
 - establishing firmly a full range of procedures to assess pupils' learning to include effective questioning, feedback to pupils on how to improve their work and the regular involvement of pupils in assessing their own work
 - ensuring teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are accurate so that the work planned is well matched and suitably challenging to meet pupils' individual needs
 - ensuring teachers' marking consistently provides points for development so that pupils always have improvement points to work on as well as opportunities to respond to these comments to consolidate their learning
 - developing the curriculum so that activities are planned that fully engage and motivate pupils and improve their basic skills and their spiritual and cultural development, especially their awareness and appreciation of multicultural society
 - ensuring that the impact of the above actions improves the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - restoring the senior leadership team to its full complement
 - ensuring that leaders develop a clear and ambitious vision for the school and more effectively support and direct whole-school improvement
 - ensuring all leaders evaluate the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility and accelerate school improvement through more robust monitoring of teaching, and more rigorous management of performance ensuring that the impact of the above actions improves the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better
 - ensuring that the governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and offers robust challenge to leaders where necessary.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wath Victoria Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 December 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and read a range of management documents including those relating to school evaluation, improvement planning, the progress of pupils and safeguarding. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair and a member of the Interim Executive Board and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two new teachers have been appointed. There is a new leader responsible for the education of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Leadership teams have been established with responsibility for improving teaching, achievement and support for those pupils at the greatest risk of underachieving. The school is seeking an academy sponsor, as required by the Department for Education.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The most recent published data for pupils' attainment, in July 2012, show a slight improvement in English and mathematics in Year 2 and Year 6 since the school became subject to special measures. Lesson observations and analysis of school records during this inspection show that the improvement has been maintained, however, there are peaks and troughs across the school, reflecting variability in the quality of teaching. In approximately half the classes, teaching has improved to the extent that almost two-thirds of the pupils now make satisfactory or better progress. Most pupils still make insufficient progress in the other classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start because of well-planned, stimulating learning activities and a strong partnership with parents.

Improvement in pupils' progress is more rapid in English than mathematics. The recently established leadership team has identified teachers' lack of mathematical knowledge as the main cause for this and their judgement is confirmed by inspection findings. The school is dedicating much effort to improving the teaching of letters and sounds, which is contributing to pupils' better achievement in English. Occasionally, pupils recognise the sounds within a word, but not the whole word itself because they are not helped to understand what the word means. School leaders have identified this problem and are taking appropriate action to increase pupils' use and understanding of the new words they are learning.

School leaders carefully check the progress of different groups of pupils and are introducing new measures to ensure that none are underachieving. Pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding from the government) benefit from a range of new

initiatives, including improved resources and better partnership with their parents and carers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make better progress in lessons because a new leader has quickly introduced effective arrangements for matching support to their needs. Pupils identified as gifted and talented extend their learning through tasks that do not limit what they can achieve. It is too early to judge whether all these new approaches are helping pupils to maintain better progress over time.

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

- improve the achievement of all groups of pupils in Years 1 to 6 in English and mathematics – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

Teaching, overall, has improved since the previous visit. A much more interesting curriculum underpins this improvement. For example, pupils' enthusiasm and progress in writing have been increased because their work is linked to such topics as evacuees in the Second World War, Greek myths and visits to Wath Woods. Pupils' increased interest is shown particularly in their eagerness to talk and ask questions about their work. Well-planned practical investigations in mathematics also help to improve pupils' achievement, for example, a Key Stage 2 class made rapid progress in problem solving when the teacher gave them a range of equipment and objects and challenged them to work out for themselves how to divide the objects into equal amounts.

The leadership team has introduced a new system for ensuring that teachers have a detailed knowledge of the learning needs of the pupils they teach so that they can plan better lessons. A minority of teachers already use this information effectively to alter tasks so that they are at the right level of challenge for all pupils in the class. This particularly benefits more-able pupils who more often work at a suitably demanding level and make much better progress. Such effective planning is not sufficiently established in all classes to make a significant difference to pupils' achievement overall. A small number of teachers use carefully planned questions and activities during lessons to check that their plan is helping all pupils to accelerate their progress, but this is not consistent across the school. As a result, some teachers persist too long with plans that are not helping many of the pupils to learn new skills.

School leaders have worked hard with teachers to ensure that their plans have a sharply focused objective for improving learning. This has helped many teachers to provide lessons with exactly the right sequence of activities to help pupils learn new skills at a good pace. In too many lessons, however, the objective is too broad or it is focused on tasks to be completed rather than new skills to be learned. This leads, for example, to lessons with too many different activities that do not go well together to support learning.

Teachers work in partnership with a team of hard working teaching assistants. Where teaching assistants have a clear plan for extending the learning of a particular group of pupils in a lesson, for example, more-able or less-able pupils, they help them to accelerate

their progress. Too often, however, their impact is reduced because they do not have a clear role in a lesson, therefore their time is spent providing brief support to any individual pupil who asks for it.

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

- improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Overall, pupils are well behaved in lessons. They are keen to learn and they work well independently when given the opportunity. In general, therefore, pupils' behaviour does not provide a barrier to their learning. Nevertheless, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils is very challenging. Staff, with very effective support from the pastoral manager, have devised effective methods for helping these pupils to improve their behaviour without disruption to teaching and learning. Pupils say that they can see a clear improvement in behaviour over the past year and they feel much safer from bullying.

The pastoral manager, working in partnership with support services, has helped the school to reduce significantly the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils. As a result, attendance overall has improved and is broadly average. He also rigorously checks on any unexplained absence to ensure that the pupil is safe.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management have improved since the previous monitoring inspection because the headteacher has set up two leadership teams to support her in improving pupils' achievement across the school. The appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has brought about a significant improvement in methods for identifying the pupils' needs and for supporting staff in meeting these needs.

Although recently formed, the leadership teams are already working together well to pinpoint weaknesses in teaching, which they do through searching analysis of lessons and pupils' outcomes. As a result, they are beginning to tackle the most important priorities for raising pupils' achievement. Their work has quickly brought about some improvements in teaching, but these are not consistent enough in all classes to make a significant difference to the ups and downs in pupils' progress.

Because there is now a greater shared responsibility for improving teaching, there is much more openness in discussing the weaknesses that need to be tackled and how people are going to work together to do this. In particular, staff are more confident in seeking training when they know their skills need to improve. This all adds up to a much stronger whole-school drive for improvement than previously existed. Plans for future improvement are directed towards ambitious targets for raising standards and they identify accurately the immediate actions that need to be taken to make progress towards these targets.

The Interim Executive Board works closely with the headteacher and new leaders to gain a detailed understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and pupils' outcomes. For example, they discuss with the English and mathematics leaders their evidence for the quality of teaching gathered from looking at pupils' work and observing lessons. They have monitored carefully the plans for improving provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and their searching questions have helped school leaders to make the new systems more effective. They provide very good support to the headteacher in the work required to become an academy, enabling her to maintain as strong a focus as possible on leading improvement in teaching and learning.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been significant improvements to the building, particularly in the provision of a safe indoor space for physical education. Staff morale has been raised by creating a new, much more pleasant staffroom. Requirements for safeguarding pupils are met.

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

- improve the impact of leadership and management – satisfactory

External support

The local authority provides effective support and challenge. It systematically reviews the progress of the school in partnership with senior leaders and the Interim Executive Board. Their involvement is built into the school's development plan ensuring their support for improving teaching and pupils' achievement is directly aligned to the school's priorities.