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14 February 2013

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

Dear Mrs Glover

Special measures monitoring inspection of Poppleton Road Primary School

Following my visit with Tom Grieveson, Senior HMI, to your school on 12 and 13 February 2013, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second 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 Adults, Children and Education for the City of York.

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 second monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 February 2013

Evidence

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

Context

Since the previous inspection the school has made three additional appointments to the teaching staff, one full time and two part-time. The partner headteacher has reduced his time at the school to one day each week.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The improvement in pupils' progress continues to gather pace. The school's accurate progress checks show that pupils' work in mathematics is improving from the disappointing results last year. Staff have been successful in sustaining the improvements in pupils' reading and writing. There is still some variation between different years and classes. The gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils are improving at a modest rate but remain too wide. This is particularly true for pupils who have extra help in class and those who have extra funding through the pupil premium.

Pupils are responding eagerly to the increased demands from teachers. They are showing a real appetite for solving problems and they are working very well together in groups. Pupils say teachers expect them to work hard and more-able pupils have noticed a big difference. One pupil remarked, 'The lessons go really quickly because I am thinking so hard; it is good to have a challenge.' Pupils are responding particularly well in lessons where they are expected to work things out for themselves.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is continuing to improve because teachers have worked hard at giving pupils the chance to work out what skills they need to solve real problems. For example, pupils in Year 5 worked with a sense of urgency and excitement in solving the practical problems related to the Tour de France Grand Départ. This involved them in deciding which calculation skills to use as well as learning how to work together without relying too much on the teacher's help. One pupil commented, 'It's not like simple sums, you have to use your brain to figure out what skills to use.'

Pupils are working at a brisker pace now. This is because teachers have made sure pupils do not waste time copying out the aims of the lesson. Teachers have also improved how they use pupils' progress checks to plan lessons at the right level. This helps more-able pupils to get off to a flying start without doing things they can already do. It also supports less-able pupils because they have time to understand things properly before they move on. In the best examples teachers use this approach for each pupil rather than for three broad ability ranges and this helps pupils to speed up their learning even more. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows when teachers have not had enough time to plan carefully with teaching assistants and important steps in learning are missed.

Teachers' marking is improving but the quality is not the same everywhere. Sometimes the quality of a teacher's marking varies from subject to subject. There are some very good examples where teachers tell students very clearly what they have done well and offer precise suggestions about what they should do next to make the work better. This is not happening enough and there are a few occasions only when pupils are asked to respond to the teachers' marking and comments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have better opportunities to show how well they can behave in class. This is because teachers are expecting them to work more independently. Pupils enjoy this increased challenge and they cooperate in groups and pairs very well. Staff are aware that some low-attaining pupils are still too reliant on adult help. Leaders and teachers are working hard to make sure lessons and resources support these pupils in working things out for themselves.

The above-average attendance of pupils has been maintained but some groups of pupils, especially those who have extra help in school and those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium do not attend as well as other groups.

Pupils continue to feel safe and happy in school. They enjoy their time on the playground and in lessons equally well.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and the leadership team have had some clear successes in improving teaching. Most teachers have improved how they develop pupils' mathematical skills and they are making sure lessons meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. Leaders have introduced an individual improvement plan for each teacher. They check lessons and pupils' work regularly to make sure teachers are using the plans effectively. This has supported teachers in improving their work where teaching has been less than good. It has also been motivating for teachers who are seeking to make sure their teaching is good and better. The headteacher, leaders and governors are sustaining a dogged insistence that nothing less than

good teaching will do. Most teachers are responding to these raised expectations with enthusiasm.

The work to make sure pupils who have extra help in lessons and those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium make the same progress as other groups is beginning to gather pace. However, leaders are not sharp enough in linking pupils' progress to other factors such as attendance and behaviour or pupils' attendance at after-school clubs and activities. Leaders, including governors, have a clear picture of how the pupil premium funding is being spent but this is not linked closely enough to what success will look like. This makes it difficult for them to evaluate how successful actions have been.

The governing body has improved the challenge and support it offers to senior leaders and staff. Governors have taken practical steps to gather more first-hand information about the quality of the school's work. For example, they did a survey of pupils' views about bullying and used the information to support the school in strengthening pupils' understanding of bullying and how to deal with it effectively.

Leaders and governors are looking into the possibility of becoming an academy to support improvements.

External support

The local authority continues to support improvements well. Staff have particularly valued the training in supporting their work to help pupils apply their calculation skills when they are solving problems. This has had a marked effect in improving teaching approaches. The partner headteacher has rightly reduced the time he spends in the school. His part in reviewing the work of the governing body has helped governors to ask more searching questions and improved the quality of the information they get from the school.