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7 March 2013

Mrs Val Eggleton  
Headteacher  
Riverside Junior School  
Holme Street  
Hebden Bridge  
West Yorkshire  
HX7 8EE

Dear Mrs Eggleton

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Riverside Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 March 2013, 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 January 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 previous monitoring inspection - good

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 Calderdale.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy

**Her Majesty's Inspector**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012**

- Improve the achievement of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs by:
  - developing a range of interventions to support pupils who have additional needs
  - training staff in how to support these pupils in small-group intervention work and when working with them on a one-to-one basis
  - providing effective support for those pupils who arrive at the school with rudimentary reading skills
  - carefully tracking the progress of pupils and intervening promptly whenever any underachievement is detected
  - improving the quality of record keeping and target setting so that staff are clear about what the pupils need to achieve and how best to support them in class.
  
- Improve achievement in writing by:
  - ensuring there is sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to write extended texts.
  
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching across the school by:
  - improving the quality of feedback to pupils so they are clear about what they need to do to improve their work
  - reducing the amount of time teachers spend giving long explanations at the expense of pupils working independently
  - ensuring teachers use assessment data effectively to plan work that matches pupils' abilities.
  - sharing more widely the good practice that currently exists in the school.



- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels drive and sustain improvements by:
  - monitoring the progress of groups of pupils over time and taking prompt action to prevent any underachievement
  - empowering staff to use assessment data effectively to challenge pupils and ensure they receive the support they need
  - refining the current system of meetings with teachers so that there is a rigorous system of holding them to account for the progress of pupils in their classes.



## **Special measures: monitoring of Riverside Junior School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 March 2013**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and National Leader in Education (NLE) who is supporting the school's work. Meetings were held with teachers and teaching assistants, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. The inspector attended a meeting of the leadership team that included the business manager and two governors. Part-lessons taught by eight teachers were observed jointly with the headteacher and NLE.

#### **Context**

There have been no changes to the context of the school or its staffing since the second monitoring visit. One teacher is currently absent on sick leave.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Standards of attainment in English and mathematics continue to be above average and the current Year 6 pupils are on track to maintain this trend in 2013. The improvements in the leadership of special educational needs provision is helping to secure better capacity for the school to accelerate the progress those pupils make. However, the progress of some pupils with special educational needs still lags behind to some extent in writing. As the quality of learning in lessons continues to improve so too does the progress most pupils are making over time in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing proportion are now making or exceeding the typically expected progress from their above-average starting points on entry to Year 3. However, this is not consistent across all year groups or subjects. Some pupils in upper Key Stage 2 have more catching up to do to reach their full potential, particularly in their reading and comprehension skills.

The school is providing increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects across the curriculum. There is a stronger focus on the correct use of grammar, spelling and punctuation and pupils are becoming more accustomed to the school's raised expectations of these. The regular sessions aimed at developing pupils' mental arithmetic and spelling skills are giving them the chance to practise these on a daily basis. This is having a positive impact because of the short, sharply focused nature of these sessions.

Most pupils are confident and articulate speakers who are keen to have their say and contribute their views. This supports their improving achievement because they are usually quick to let teachers know when work is too easy or too difficult for them. On a few occasions, it can also reduce the pace of their learning as some are keen to talk socially to



their friends in class rather than focus completely on the work they are expected to complete. The quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work in books are still variable. This could be improved in order to demonstrate more convincingly their progress across all subjects.

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

- improve the achievement of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs – satisfactory
- improve achievement in writing – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

Although some variability in the quality of teaching across the school remains, the improvements in teaching are becoming more evident and secure now. This provides a more solid basis on which to build future sustainable improvement and teachers are more aware of their accountability for the progress pupils make. Some of the emerging strengths observed across the school during this monitoring inspection were:

- improved use of time to maximise opportunities for pupils to work independently
- better attention paid to ensuring a good pace of learning by making efforts to more closely match learning activities and questioning to pupils' different abilities
- the effective contribution made by teaching assistants in lessons and individual or small-group work to help improve pupils' rates of progress, particularly for those with additional learning needs
- effective use of interactive whiteboard technology to enhance explanations to pupils, and provide a variety of visual prompts or additional information on topics or tasks
- classroom organisation and management that helps lessons run smoothly with the right resources to hand for pupils to organise themselves
- more opportunities provided for pupils to apply their speaking and listening skills constructively to enhance learning, for example discussions in pairs or groups and feeding back verbally on specific questions or problem-solving tasks
- improvements in teachers' knowledge of what pupils already know and can do, through more accurate checks on their work during lessons and assessments
- pupils' better knowledge of how well they are doing and how to improve their work further, particularly in writing
- teachers' feedback through marking which is more effective as pupils are expected to respond to specific comments that help to stretch their thinking or reinforce their understanding.

Teachers are aware that these positive features need to be more consistent in all lessons and year groups across the school in order to accelerate pupils' progress further. Teachers have felt constrained to some extent by thinking they have to adhere to a narrow range of teaching strategies and subject content, when this is not the case. They are ready now to



build on their new levels of confidence to develop pupils' skills across a wider range of subjects, through exciting activities and themes.

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

- improve the consistency and quality of teaching across the school – good

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve, particularly when they are fully engaged in appropriate learning activities that stretch their capabilities and motivate them to rise to the challenge. Pupils say they have a clear understanding of the expectations of behaviour, although they feel that some staff may 'give more second chances' than others, so there is room for this to be more consistent. Behaviour outside lessons can be over-boisterous at times as a small minority of pupils forget to give more consideration to others as they dash outside at lunchtimes, for example.

Although the school has introduced a house system and house points to promote team building and working together for a common purpose, it acknowledges that this is a work in progress as there has been little impact so far. Pupils do have a positive attitude towards helping others, as reflected in their commitment to fundraising for a number of charities. The work of the learning mentor is valued by staff, pupils and parents, and a few parents attend her Friday morning 'pop-in' sessions. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the last monitoring inspection leaders and the governing body have worked hard to increase the rate of progress the school is making. Their checks on its work are increasingly rigorous and accurate so that particular strengths are identified to demonstrate good practice, and weaknesses are tackled more quickly. The progress made by groups of pupils and individuals is checked regularly. These judgements are more reliable and accurate than before, particularly in writing, allowing for the setting of more relevant and precise targets for improvement. The governing body has a stronger understanding of what national data on attainment and progress show, so that they ask more searching questions of senior leaders. This is extending towards subject or middle leaders now as expectations rise. Governors are more aware of how these leaders should also be challenged to answer questions about performance across the school in their areas of responsibility. Some members of the governing body come into school regularly, even attending some leadership team meetings. This helps them to maintain a good knowledge of the day-to-day work of the school and its key priorities and challenges.

There is a much increased level of confidence and trust in the leadership of the school and its capacity to improve. Relationships and staff morale are mostly positive and everyone wants to do their best to continue to improve pupils' outcomes. Parents receive regular communication from the school, including a newsletter from governors. They are invited to



share their views and are consulted about any proposed changes. Time is spent listening and responding to queries and comments from parents. There is an understanding that, at times when opposing views are expressed, the final decisions rest with the headteacher and governing body as they are ultimately held accountable for the school's performance.

The leadership of teaching and learning is improving through more accurate judgements of what aspects are going well and where further professional development and training are required. The NLE links make a positive contribution to this and staff enjoy the opportunities to visit the support school to observe or share ideas, teaching methods and subject leadership expertise.

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

- ensure leaders and managers at all levels drive and sustain improvements – good

### **External support**

The work of the National Leader in Education and staff at Ashlands Primary School is a beneficial partnership arrangement that staff and governors at Riverside appreciate. It makes a positive contribution to the quality of leadership, teaching and learning. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is significantly stronger than previously. The local authority checks on the school's progress regularly and is aware of the importance of ensuring that some form of 'exit strategy' of monitoring and support is planned once the school is ready to be removed from special measures.

