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21 March 2013

Mrs Paula Martin
Headteacher
Ravensdale Junior School
Devonshire Drive
Mickleover
Derby
DE3 9EY

Dear Mrs Martin

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ravensdale Junior School

Following my visit with Tracey Keane, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19–20 March 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 on 21 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 only be appointed in consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Children's Services for Derby City Council.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and raise attainment in writing and mathematics so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout their time at school by:
 - using pupils' current assessment information to plan lessons
 - matching work to pupils' differing abilities
 - maintaining a brisk pace in lessons
 - extending pupils' opportunities to write for longer periods across a range of subjects.

- Develop robust and effective management systems by:
 - incorporating measurable targets into the school development plan, including milestones to check progress, against which the senior management team and the governing body can gauge the school's progress
 - using pupils' assessment information effectively to evaluate the achievement of all groups of pupils and to target priorities
 - train senior and middle leaders to undertake a wider range of monitoring activities and to rigorously follow up points for development identified by them, particularly from lesson observations and data analysis
 - ensure that the governing body is given information about pupils' achievement which enables it to support and challenge the school, and link its monitoring to the school's main priorities.

Special measures monitoring of Ravensdale Junior School

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 19–20 March 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior and subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also spoke to some parents in the playground at the end of the school day.

Context

Since the time of the last monitoring visit three new members have joined the governing body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' overall achievement is improving in each year group, and for all groups of pupils. Progress has been accelerating since the beginning of this academic year. Inspectors could see this in the quality of work in pupils' books, during lessons and from the good information the school is collecting on how well pupils are achieving. A Year 3 boy told a teaching assistant, 'This is fun!' when he was solving problems in a mathematics lesson. Pupils' positive attitudes and good attendance are important factors contributing to their better achievement.

Almost all pupils in Year 6 are making at least the progress expected of them so far this year in reading, writing and mathematics. However, less-able Year 6 pupils are making slower progress than their classmates in mathematics. The school's evidence shows that despite the overall improving picture there are still some areas of concern. The progress the current Year 5 pupils have made since joining the school is too variable. In addition, too many pupils are not making quick enough progress in developing their writing skills, particularly in Years 4 and 5. The gaps in attainment between pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and other pupils are still too wide. This is also true for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding). However, the gaps are narrowing in each class for all these groups.

The standard of work in pupils' books reflects their increasing rates of progress, but also the variations in how well they are learning. Pupils' topic books are a good example. Some pupils are not completing enough extended writing in them, and not all teachers expect the same standard of writing.

The quality of teaching

In the lessons observed, much teaching was good and some was outstanding. There remains some teaching that is not yet good but this is decreasing. These improvements to teaching mean that pupils are now learning more quickly. However, the improvements have not yet had time to make sure that all pupils are catching up on previous underachievement.

The strengths of teaching identified in the previous monitoring visit letter continue to be evident, and there have been further improvements. In the best lessons, teachers' planning takes good account of the skills and abilities that pupils already have. This means that pupils who are either struggling to understand or need to be pushed further are supported increasingly well. Teachers make good use of 'working walls' in classrooms to help children see what they need to do to develop their learning and be successful. This is one of the routines that school leaders are establishing to help all pupils to be less reliant on asking the teacher for help before trying to work out the answer themselves.

In a Year 4 English lesson, outstanding teaching and high expectations of what could be achieved meant that pupils of all abilities quickly developed their understanding of how to construct a story. The teacher asked excellent questions that made pupils think carefully about their choices. Good-quality support from teaching assistants in a number of lessons helped different groups of pupils, including the most able, to develop their skills and abilities to solve problems. However, there remains some inconsistency in the effectiveness with which these additional adults support individual pupils in and out of the classroom.

Where teaching is not yet good, it still does not focus on making sure that pupils of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs, are supported to learn well. Sometimes all pupils are given the same task to complete, but with no additional help or challenge when needed. Even when teaching is good, there are times when activities do not have a clear enough purpose that makes sure pupils can develop their reading or writing skills. Marking is regular and there is consistency across the school in how teachers organise written feedback. What is less consistent is how well this feedback gives specific advice to pupils about how to improve their work, and how well teachers make sure pupils then act on this advice.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In lessons, pupils' behaviour is almost always at least good and sometimes outstanding. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations and the many well-established routines, such as coming back to attention quickly after discussions. Pupils are keen to work together and they respond well to the many opportunities for 'talk partner' activities. Pupils have strong relationships with teachers and other adults, and with their classmates. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and with different needs get on well together. They move sensibly and safely around the

school building at different times of the day. Pupils continue to describe feeling safe and cared for by the school staff. They like the way the headteacher knows them by name, and that lunchtime supervisors remember which pupils prefer apple rather than orange juice.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher continues to make clear her expectations of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. These are shown in the demanding objectives in the management of teachers' performance. Senior leaders are good role models and those who also teach are good and outstanding teachers. The impact of this leadership is shown in the better teaching and improved progress of pupils. However, too many remaining inconsistencies mean not all pupils are achieving as well as they could.

Evidence from the good tracking system is used in the regular meetings about pupils' progress between teachers and leaders. Training for teachers on how best to use this information means that they have a better understanding of how well their pupils are making progress, and also which individual or groups of pupils need more support. While this is making a difference to pupils' achievement, more still needs to be done. Teachers have had further training on how to teach writing. The school's information on pupils' progress and the work in their books show that this is beginning to have a more positive impact, although this is also inconsistent.

Senior leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school's work. Plans for improvement are realistic and sufficiently demanding, and are focused on the key actions that are needed. The special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) have gathered and analysed a range of information about the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This should now be used to tackle further the weaknesses in these pupils' progress, and to make sure that they are taught effectively.

Strong leadership from the Chair of the Governing Body and the wider expertise of individual governors have led to striking improvements since the school became subject to special measures. Governors have a very good understanding of how well pupils are achieving, including those supported by additional government funding. They are becoming increasingly effective in knowing how best to challenge and support senior leaders to improve the work of the school as quickly as possible.

External support

The local authority provides good-quality support. This has given governors a more detailed understanding of national data on pupils' achievement, and has also shown mathematics and literacy leaders a wider range of ways to check the quality of teaching. The headteacher's visit to another school, which was suggested by a local

authority officer, has given her further specific ideas about good practice that she is now implementing.