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21 March 2013

Clare Fletcher
Headteacher
North Walsham Junior School
Manor Road
North Walsham
NR28 9HG

Dear Mrs Fletcher

Special measures monitoring inspection of North Walsham Junior School

Following my visit with Kathleen Yates, 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 26 June 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.

Up to two newly qualified teachers may be appointed in any area of the school. HMI should be notified if such appointments take place.

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 Norfolk and as below.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and raise attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - setting high expectations for pupils' learning
 - using information about pupils' prior learning as a starting point for setting challenging targets
 - matching tasks to pupils' different abilities
 - informing pupils about how well they are progressing towards their targets and what they need to do to improve when their work is marked
 - ensuring pupils practise their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all subjects.

- Develop leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders regularly monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' achievements and use this information to enable staff to extend the learning of all pupils
 - there is greater rigour in the management of teachers' performance
 - the governing body works closely with school leaders in reviewing and evaluating the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of North Walsham 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, groups of pupils, parents, the vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. All 11 classes were observed by inspectors.

Context

The school's context remains as at the last monitoring visit, though with an increased number of pupils on roll. A Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) has been appointed for Year 6.

Achievement of pupils at the school

No new examination results have been published since the last monitoring visit. The trend of improvement in standards has continued, though at different rates in different year groups and subjects. The school is quickly overcoming the legacy of underachievement. In all year groups, the proportion of those making expected or better progress is rising. This improvement is most marked in Years 4 and 5. Overall, standards are around average when they leave the school at the end of Year 6. This represents a considerable improvement on previous years. Both mathematics and English are improving, though English is improving faster.

Gaps between the achievement of boys and girls are small overall, although boys' writing is weaker than that of the girls. Despite this, boys catch up quickly in Year 6. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make slower progress than their peers but the gap is closing.

Good monitoring of pupils' progress is now enabling senior leaders to check how well the school is doing. This means that support can be targeted accurately to where it is needed; for example, to individual pupils or entire year groups. This approach is now well developed and successful.

The quality of teaching

Inspectors observed a higher proportion of good teaching and learning than at the last monitoring visit. This is because staff have undertaken much professional development. Most of this has been the observation and analysis of teaching by skilled teachers, together with extensive coaching. The school's lesson observation system is accurate and places an appropriate emphasis on learning. This enables the school to provide precise support for teachers where needed.

In lessons, pupils have quickly developed a capacity for independent learning. The use of commercially available learning packages for the teaching of mathematics and English means that these lessons are structured well. Pupils learn at a good pace and apply themselves very effectively. In the best of these lessons, teachers allow pupils to learn almost completely independently, with teachers expertly giving prompts and asking questions where appropriate. In these classes, pupils are encouraged to develop self-reliance and confidence in their own abilities. This is demonstrated by the significant number of pupils who attend extra mathematics and Latin lessons taught by teachers from a nearby secondary school. These pupils comfortably handle work pitched at GCSE level.

The structured teaching of mathematics and English takes place during mornings. Other subjects are taught in the afternoons. These lessons are occasionally less well structured. Pupils are sometimes given a level of work below that of the morning sessions; for example, tasks that fail to stimulate pupils to learn. As a consequence, some become bored and restless, and learning suffers.

Accurate assessment has enabled the school to set challenging individual targets for pupils. This is used increasingly well across the whole school. Homework is now set more regularly, and is more demanding. The marking of written work is of a high standard, though pupils are not always given opportunities in class to review marking or to go back and correct work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The last inspection report raised no issues relating to behaviour and safety so this aspect was not a focus of this second monitoring inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The strong and effective school improvement work of the new headteacher and senior team has continued. Job roles and responsibilities have been further refined, and performance management systems are now well established. Targets for staff and lines of accountability are clear and precise. Accurate monitoring of every aspect of the school's work is now established and used to drive up standards.

Changes to the curriculum have had a significant effect on pupils' achievement and their outlook. Structured learning in core subjects, together with well-focused support and challenge, are transforming pupils' experience of school. Pupils are rapidly becoming accomplished learners.

The school's self-evaluation is simple, clear and accurate. It is closely linked to action plans that have clear milestones and timescales. Targets are challenging but

achievable, and progress towards them is monitored effectively by both senior leaders and governors.

Governors are increasingly closely involved in school life, paying useful themed visits to the school and reporting back their findings to the whole governing body. The headteacher provides accurate and comprehensive information to governors, who challenge the school well. However, this is not always shown in the records of meetings, making it difficult to track progress in resolving issues over time.

External support

Much of the support necessary to improve the school has been provided by the headteacher and senior team. The local authority has enabled the school to work closely with a nearby Local leader of Education. They have also assisted the school to standardise assessment and monitoring processes.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that afternoon classes are consistently well-structured to challenge pupils to the same extent as those of the mornings.
- Ensure that governors' challenges are recorded with suitable timescales and targets for any actions, so that progress can be reviewed at subsequent meetings.