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21 March 2013

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 to your school on 19 and 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.

The visit was the third 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**

## 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 of Wath Victoria Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 March 2013**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and read a range of management documents including those relating to school evaluation, improvement planning, pupils' progress and safeguarding. He met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

The school has identified an academy sponsor, which has been approved by the Department for Education. Plans are now in place for the school to become an academy in November 2013.

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

Lesson observations and school records show that the rate of improvement in achievement has accelerated since the previous monitoring inspection. This is largely because of the increased support for teachers from two recently established leadership teams. As a result of their work, a much higher proportion of pupils make progress at the rate expected of them or better. There is still, however, a significant number of pupils who are not making enough progress because teaching in a small number of classes is much slower to improve. Those pupils who are making better progress are rapidly closing the gap on the standards in English and mathematics that they should be achieving for their age. This enables the school to set targets for standards at the end of Key Stage 2 which represent a significant improvement on previous years.

The weaker performance in mathematics compared to English has been successfully tackled through school leaders guiding staff where required. Pupils' achievement in both subjects is increasingly extended through work in other areas of the curriculum, although this is not firmly established in all classes. Pupils' achievement in English has been strengthened during the last term because staff have received training in teaching letters and their sounds more effectively.

Most pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils whose parents are serving in the armed forces, have improved their progress considerably during the past term. This is because the additional resources have enabled teachers to give them, and their parents, extra support and guidance specifically designed to help them catch up. Despite this, around a fifth of the pupils are still not catching up quickly enough and school leaders are working hard to identify and tackle their more significant barriers to learning. A similar pattern is seen with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Recently introduced improvements in identifying their needs accurately, planning their support and involving their parents have quickly borne fruit, with the result that around

three quarters are making much better progress than they were in previous terms. A group of pupils, who are significantly more able than the others, have begun to achieve higher standards because teachers are much more aware of how to add stretch to their work.

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**

The quality of teaching has improved in most classes; therefore, more of it is good or outstanding. There remains, however, a persistent minority that is inadequate or requires improvement and this is putting a brake on pupils' progress.

The headteacher and school leaders successfully promote more effective teaching methods by arranging week-long programmes in which there is a focus on one subject. In a science week coinciding with the inspection, for example, most teachers extended their skills in planning practical tasks to enable pupils to solve interesting, challenging problems. Where this was done successfully most pupils accelerated their progress, not only in science but also in literacy and numeracy. For example, pupils in Year 1 extended their writing and speaking skills considerably when evaluating the robots they had previously made with a visiting specialist. Pupils in Year 4 improved their measurement and scale-drawing skills when devising experiments to find the best design for aeroplanes, kites and parachutes.

Where pupils' progress is improving most, teachers plan lessons in which work is adapted to provide the correct level of challenge for all groups of pupils. When this is combined with a 'wow factor' that really inspires the pupils, they make exceptional progress: for example, in Year 6, when the teacher demonstrated a real enthusiasm for science and gave the pupils experience of the mystery of making dense materials float, or when children in the Early Years Foundation Stage observed what happened when bicarbonate of soda was added to vinegar. This excitement in learning is still seen too rarely across the school.

Marking has improved considerably, with new systems being put in place to give pupils constructive guidance and the opportunity to respond to it. This work is at an early stage and, therefore, effective practice is not firmly established across the school. Teaching assistants are given a much clearer role in lessons, especially in relation to improving pupils' progress by carrying out well-planned activities with them for a sustained period of time.

Where teaching results in little or no pupil progress it is because work is not pitched at the right level for most of the class, lessons lack focus, with too many different ideas being introduced at once, and independent activities are badly organised. Some lessons that are better than this start well but lose their impact because teachers do not recognise when they need to modify their plans, for example when pupils are becoming disinterested or when they are ready to get on straight away with something that is intended for the next day.

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**

Pupils' behaviour overall has improved considerably during this school year. Poor behaviour is a barrier to learning only for a small minority of pupils who have significant social and emotional difficulties. The pastoral manager gives very effective support to these pupils, which is helping them to settle down during lessons and achieve more. When they do start to become disruptive in lessons, most staff usually manage to get them back to work without any major disruption to other pupils' learning.

Pupils are showing much more enjoyment in their work than they did during previous monitoring inspections. This is because their lessons are more interesting and some teachers are introducing more fun into learning. Because pupils like coming to school more, their attendance is improving.

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

The pace of improvement has accelerated because the headteacher is well supported by the two leadership teams that were newly set up at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. These teams have quickly made a positive impact on pupils' achievement by helping teachers to improve their classroom practice. In particular, they make sure that teachers can assess pupils' progress accurately so that lesson plans are pitched at the right level. They have also provided strong leadership in improving outcomes for pupils supported by the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special education needs. In this work they are quickly demonstrating a growing capacity to remove the causes of special measures and to continue improving pupils' achievement beyond that.

The headteacher and leadership teams can pinpoint precisely which pupils need better teaching or additional support because they now have very clear and detailed records of their achievements. They use these to ensure that all teachers have a well-focused plan for each pupil who is underachieving so that they can catch up as quickly as possible. They regularly check with each teacher that these plans are effective and their evaluations show that they are having a positive impact for a growing majority of pupils. The headteacher and leadership teams also regularly monitor lessons and provide constructive feedback to help teachers improve their classroom practice. The majority of teachers welcome this support and often take the initiative in requesting it. This illustrates the growing commitment of most teachers to bringing the school out of special measures as quickly as possible.

The school is strengthening its partnership with parents. A significant number come into the classes of almost all age groups on a daily basis, either to spend time reading or writing with their children or to help with practical activities like making robots. Parents say that this helps them to understand what their children are doing in school and how they can support their learning at home.

The Interim Executive Board is very well informed about the strengths and remaining weaknesses in the school and its members are helped in this by frequent, frank and detailed reports from the headteacher. The Board, therefore, is enabled to make a strong contribution to the school's improvement planning. Members' management of the transition

to academy status is very effective, ensuring that new arrangements are appropriate to the school's needs and that school leaders are not diverted from raising the achievement of pupils currently in the school. The school meets requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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

- Improve the impact of leadership and management – good

### **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. Local authority advisers and consultants have recently given the school very constructive support in improving teaching and developing the skills of members of the new leadership teams. Recognising that these teams are now demonstrating a much stronger capacity to improve teaching independently, the local authority has, rightly, started to reduce the amount of support it provides.