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17 May 2013

Mrs Debbie 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 Mark Evans, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 May 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 third 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.

One newly qualified teacher has been appointed, with my agreement, to work in Year 5. No other newly qualified teachers may 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 Children's Services for 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 third monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 May 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, teachers, a group of pupils, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. One inspector spoke to parents informally in the playground.

Context

One teacher has been appointed to cover maternity leave and another has returned to work following maternity leave. One member of the senior leadership team is on long-term sickness absence. The school continues to consider the possibility of becoming an academy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The improvement in pupils' progress has been maintained. The vast majority of Year 6 pupils are on target to make the progress expected of them and many more are set to do even better. Girls generally make better progress than boys, especially in reading. The gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils are beginning to iron out. The progress of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium still lags behind, despite the overall improvement. Reading continues to be a strength across the school. Pupils' skills in writing are improving and they are getting much better at using and understanding technical aspects of language. For example, Year 5 pupils can talk sensibly about imperative verbs and alliteration and use them correctly. The new ways of teaching mathematics are paying dividends. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning and they are proud to describe themselves as 'mathematicians'. Pupils' progress throughout the school is improving. This is supported by effective additional sessions run by teaching assistants for small groups of pupils who need extra help in class.

In lessons, pupils continue to work hard and relish the increased level of challenge. They expect more from themselves and of their teachers. They are quite candid in explaining that teachers are giving them harder work but there are still occasions when this does not happen.

The quality of teaching

Teachers take a real pride in improving their work. There is now a significant core of good and outstanding teaching in the school in which teachers are exacting in their expectations. For example, more-able pupils in Year 3 were converting fractions to work out which was the biggest. They enjoyed the experience of battling with difficult problems and made good progress. In the best examples, teachers are equally skilled in making sure pupils' learning is at exactly the right level. They design questions to stretch the most-able and boost the confidence of the least-able. Not all teachers have this high level of skill.

Teachers seek out every opportunity to develop their work. They talk about different ideas and are quite clear that teaching that falls below that of the best is simply not good enough. This ambition and determination is bearing fruit because teaching continues to improve quickly. Teaching assistants play an important part in this improvement. They now plan regularly with teachers and often enhance the learning with well-judged questions and prompts. However, there are still the odd occasions when they help children too much, especially during group discussions.

Teachers' marking has improved and the new marking policy is now being used by everybody. Pupils are delighted with the 'pink to think' marks. They respond to these challenges set by teachers to think about their work more carefully and learn from their mistakes. Pupils told inspectors, 'you know what you need to work on'.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have used the increased opportunities to work things out for themselves by showing how well they can behave. They are self-disciplined when they work in groups and very little time is lost as they move from task to task. They are routinely helpful and kind to each other and to adults. They have impeccable manners.

Attendance continues to be better than that found nationally. Staff have worked hard to give more effective support to help the small number of pupils who struggle to attend school regularly. This insightful work has supported families in overcoming significant difficulties.

There is a cheerful atmosphere in the school in which pupils continue to feel safe and valued. There is a buzz of learning and curiosity brought about by the more interesting tasks in lessons and pupils' ability to work under their own steam. Pupils are good company. They are increasingly able to talk enthusiastically and eloquently about their work.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders have gelled as an effective and ambitious team. They are setting the bar ever-higher for teachers and pupils alike. This is supported by the now well-established systems to coach teachers in working out exactly what they need to do next to improve their work. The headteacher leads the school with an eye for detail, she expects a great deal from the staff who, on the whole, have risen to her expectations with vigour. The robust system of checking on the quality of teaching and the work in pupils' books is now routine. The information gathered through these checks makes sure leaders have a much better picture of what is going well and where they need to take action.

Governors are increasingly effective. They have improved the way they analyse the information they have about the quality of the work of the school. For example, a governor now sits on a panel of professionals who regularly meet to consider how they can help identified pupils improve their attendance.

Leaders have introduced a new way of tracking how well pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding are doing. This details exactly what needs to improve for each pupil and spells out precisely what success will look like. This will support governors and leaders in checking how effective the use of the extra funding has been.

Governors are exploring the possibility of the school becoming an academy. They are working with the Department for Education to identify a suitable potential sponsor.

External support

The partner headteacher provided effective support for the school in the early months following the last full inspection. This is no longer needed and this support has quite rightly concluded. The local authority has also reduced its level of support but remains an effective source of advice and challenge. The School Improvement Adviser has been particularly successful in developing the skills of leaders in observing lessons. This is partly why leaders are increasingly skilled and confident in driving up the quality of teaching.