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20 June 2013

Mrs Jane Fearnley
Executive Headteacher
Greasbrough Primary School
Munsbrough Rise
Greasbrough
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S61 4RB

Dear Mrs Fearnley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Greasbrough Primary School

Following my visit with Keith Bardon, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 June 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 in November 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.

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring work matches all pupils' abilities
 - using a consistent approach to improve pupils' reading
 - having high expectations of the standard and amount of work that pupils produce
 - improving the quality of pupils' presentation of their work
 - sharing the best practices in assessment so that all pupils are clear as to how well they are doing and the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring teaching consistently holds pupils' interest and makes them keen to learn
 - providing good quality homework and other activities to extend pupils' learning.

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment so that their achievement is at least good by:
 - improving the indoor and outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - increasing the rate of progress for all groups of pupils
 - ensuring consistently high expectations in all classes
 - evaluating the outcomes for individuals supported by the Pupil Premium and, where necessary, taking the appropriate action to improve their achievement.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers in driving rapid improvement by:
 - ensuring the best aspects of current teaching are shared across the school
 - ensuring the governing body acts speedily to hold school leaders to account for tackling pupils' poor progress
 - as a matter of urgency, ensuring the school has sufficiently well qualified and experienced staff to undertake all leadership responsibilities
 - identifying the training needs of staff and providing suitable training
 - ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils
 - improving the school's website so that it is useful to pupils and parents.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 June 2013

Evidence

During this inspection inspectors evaluated teaching and learning in each of the nine classes in the school and a session to boost the numeracy skills of targeted pupils. Inspectors also: examined pupils' books and samples of their work; assessed their behaviour in and out of lessons; and visited the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. They met with the executive headteacher, the two leaders of learning, the Chair of the Governing Body and two local authority representatives. Inspectors also spoke to the literacy leader, the special educational needs co-ordinator and groups of pupils. They also reviewed the school's development plans and monitoring and evaluation records.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection three staff have resigned, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who was also the mathematics co-ordinator. The Year 3 teacher has also left the school. The Year 1 teacher has been absent due to illness for an extended period and the assistant headteacher has announced she is retiring. To strengthen the school's leadership, two leaders of learning, one of whom has assumed the mathematics co-ordinator role, have been employed to work in the school for two and a half days a week each. They are overseen by the former consultant headteacher who has been installed as an executive headteacher, although she still retains her role as headteacher of Herringthorpe Junior School. A new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has also been employed. In the short term, the school is using supply teachers to cover the Year 1, Year 3 and Early Years Foundation Stage classes affected by the absence, resignations and departure of staff. Permanent replacements have been found where necessary, but they cannot take up the posts until September 2013. The vice-chair has been elected Chair of the Governing Body and a new parent governor has been appointed. A formal collaboration has been established between Herringthorpe Junior and Greasbrough Primary School for the former to support the latter's removal from special measures.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's latest tracking information indicates that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is rising and that they are making faster progress than they were when the school was judged to require special measures. This is the case for all groups, such as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, those eligible for pupil premium funding and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The pace of pupils' progress does vary across year groups and within subjects with examples of exceptional progress in Year 5, but much slower progress in Years 3 and 4. The school understands that slower rates of progress will not enable pupils to 'recover' rapidly the lost ground in their learning resulting from their prior underachievement. Even with the more recent surge in their progress, pupils' levels of attainment when set against national age-related expectations are below average. The school knows that this situation needs correcting if pupils are not to be disadvantaged when they transfer to the next stage of their education. Lesson observations corroborated the school's data revealing a mixed profile of pupils making rapid and more

modest progress during lessons. It was clear that the school's support for pupils with major gaps in their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding is having a positive effect.

The quality of teaching

The actions taken to improve teaching quality are bearing some fruit. Inspectors found that: expectations of what pupils are capable of are higher; planning is more consistent; there is a more systematic approach to improving pupils' reading and improving the quality of their handwriting; and the quality and rigour of the school's assessment systems have improved. Staff are profiting from the training, coaching and mentoring they have received and the higher ratio of good teaching evident is reflected in pupils' faster progress.

During the inspection teaching ranged from good to requiring improvement, with none that was inadequate. In the strongest lessons work is pitched at the right level to challenge and motivate pupils. Pupils are urged to problem-solve, work unaided, and to use and apply their understanding of the new concepts and knowledge they are acquiring. Questioning is used to develop or consolidate their understanding and skilful support and guidance ensure that they have the confidence and skills to tackle the demanding learning activities set. As a result, pupils are becoming ambitious, more confident and can persevere when they find work difficult. These skills, together with the increasing competence of staff and the setting of more appropriate and engaging homework are helping pupils to make faster progress.

The revised assessment policy has led to a more consistent and rigorous approach to the collection and analysis of pupils' progress data. The pupils with learning journey files in Key Stage 2 are more aware of how well they are doing in relation to their targets and what they need to do to improve further. The quality of marking and feedback is also improving.

There has been a big improvement in the quality of the indoor and outdoor provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with a much sharper focus on facilitating learning and providing continuous provision for developing children's literacy and numeracy skills, alongside a number of other aspects such as their physical, social and emotional development. Children make their own choices as well as benefiting from specific sessions with staff. The lead inspector was fascinated by the creativity several children showed when they set up and acted out scenarios in their own accident and emergency unit of a hospital.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the inspection pupils' behaviour and safety did not cause inspectors concern and pupils' related well to each other and staff in and out of the classroom. Staff are applying the new behaviour policy more consistently and the number of incidents is falling. Pupils say behaviour has got better. Organised activities at social times and work to resolve conflicts between groups of pupils have helped to promote a more cohesive ethos in the school.

Improving attendance is proving a harder nut to crack and it has worsened since last year despite the school's best efforts. Leaders know they must do even more to ensure that parents and pupils realise the damage absence can have on educational attainment and progress. The school has had some success in reducing the rates of persistent absence.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Spearheaded by the actions of the strategically astute executive headteacher, leaders have sustained the momentum of improvement indicated at the first monitoring inspection. They are ensuring that the best aspects of teaching are being shared across the school by using acknowledged effective staff to coach and support their colleagues. This is supplemented by the mentoring and training of the leaders of learning who are also having a positive impact. Leaders have been uncompromising in refusing to accept inadequacy and tough decisions about staffing have been expedited. Well qualified staff have been brought in to bolster leadership capacity and most key roles are now filled. The systematic implementation of the school's improvement plan is provoking a sea change in atmosphere, ethos and expectations of what staff must do and what pupils are capable of achieving. The introduction of a series of non-negotiable features of teaching and learning, planning, behaviour management and approaches to boosting reading and writing effectiveness underline leaders' determination to bring sustainable improvement and consistency to the school's work. So too does the change to the school day which has recovered lost learning time and the new attainment grid which has brought added clarity to exactly how well all pupils are progressing.

The curriculum continues to be broadened with an emphasis on making the connections between subjects more explicit to pupils and helping them to develop key skills and concepts in an interesting, yet systematic way. Opportunities to be creative, work practically and experience learning outside of the classroom have been enhanced with more regular visits, visitors and project work. But this approach is still not universally embedded.

Steps have been taken to ensure that the school's website is more of a resource for parents, with information concerning key policies and the developments taking place in the school. However, the school may want to canvass opinion and to monitor the usage of the website to determine whether their actions have led to it being valued and used routinely.

The quality of governance continues to improve under the stewardship of the proactive and industrious chair. More robust systems now exist to monitor, challenge and aid the school's improvement and hold leaders to account. There is heightened awareness of the full extent of their roles and responsibilities, which has been underpinned by effective training. The increased confidence this has brought has improved the quality of dialogue and challenge in meetings and governors are clearer about the effectiveness of the school's provision. They have raised their profile by writing newsletters and going to parents' meetings.

External support

The partner school and the local authority are proving indispensable in helping the school to improve. They have: brokered the employment of senior staff; strengthened the leadership of the governing body; provided experienced staff to lead learning developments; and monitored and evaluated the progress the school is making in addressing its weaknesses.