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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 25 and 26 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed if required.

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 a 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 June 2013****Evidence**

The inspector observed lessons, scrutinised pupils' work, listened to pupils reading and analysed 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 two representatives from the local authority.

Context

The school is scheduled to become an academy on 1 November 2013. A significant number of teaching staff have resigned with effect from 31 August 2013.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Lesson observations, school records and pupils' work show that the proportion of pupils making rapid progress in English and mathematics has increased significantly. As a result many more pupils are working at or above the levels expected for their age. An important development is that this improvement can be seen in almost all classes; therefore the dips that previously occurred in pupils' progress are being removed. These rising standards have come about because new approaches to teaching and the curriculum, introduced over the last two terms, are now becoming firmly established and are having a much stronger impact.

The difference in pupils' performance between subjects has reduced considerably as a result of improvements in the teaching of writing and in teachers' mathematical knowledge. Pupils' results in national tests of letters and sounds have improved significantly since 2012, although they are still below average because too many of the less-able readers have not got all the skills they need for tackling new words. Pupils' ability to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to new situations is improving because teachers use a much wider range of interesting first-hand experiences to extend work in reading, writing and calculating. Good examples are when pupils collect and analyse data on peoples' opinions about plans for new housing and when they write accounts about their visit to the coast. Occasionally, pupils' writing is not as good as it could be because they start it too soon after their visit instead of spending more time extending their ideas, for example, through further investigation or talking activities.

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, are making progress at the

same rate as other pupils and are closing the gap on the standards they should be achieving. This is due to the additional resources being used effectively for matching support closely to their individual needs. The majority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are also making progress at a faster than expected rate and, as a result, an increasing number no longer require additional support. This is because of the improved identification of their needs combined with gaining more support from parents in supporting their learning at home.

Senior leaders have effectively introduced a programme to boost the achievement of the least-able 20% of pupils. This has had a very strong impact, especially for upper Key Stage 2 pupils where general teaching was skilfully adapted to increase the impact of the programme. An increasing number of pupils are working at levels above those expected for their age because teachers give them more stretching questions and activities in lessons.

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 – good

The quality of teaching

With clear guidance from senior and middle leadership teams, teaching is more consistently effective and there is a considerable reduction in aspects requiring improvement. Remaining weaknesses include, for example, the lessons of a minority of teachers who have worked very hard to improve their practice, but who are not always confident enough to adapt their new approaches to what pupils need for effective learning. In some cases there is insufficient assessment of pupils' achievement during lessons in order to increase support or challenge where necessary. Progress slows down in a small number of lessons where the teacher has given insufficient thought to precisely what the pupils are intended to learn and what the best activities are for this purpose. Where teaching is stubbornly inadequate, the headteacher and Interim Executive Board have taken firm action to lessen its negative impact on pupils' achievement.

The most effective teaching has been influenced strongly by the more interesting and practical curriculum that has been developed this year. This includes week-long projects during which pupils study a topic in depth by applying skills from many subjects. Their learning is also enriched through well planned local fieldwork and many journeys further afield to places of interest. Pupils are therefore given more opportunities to build their learning on interesting first-hand experiences such as studying the impact of new housing in their neighbourhood, observing eco-systems in nearby woodland and learning about marine life at the coast, all of which were seen during the inspection.

More teachers are keeping the emphasis on activity in lessons rather than long question and answer sessions; therefore pupils' pace of learning is much better. Some teachers accelerate pupils' learning by giving them challenging, extended problems or research tasks and a considerable amount of independence in deciding how to tackle them. Teachers organise their resources very well to support this independent learning, for example, during the inspection, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils made very effective use of computer tablets to record information when carrying out surveys. The majority of teachers are much more skilful in adapting questions and tasks to provide the correct level of challenge for all groups of pupils. Teaching assistants are much more aware of how to help groups of pupils to meet the lesson's objectives and they increasingly use their initiative to change a task when learning is slowing down.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well planned and organised. It meets the children's learning needs and interests because it is informed by very thorough assessment of their learning and development. Adults use conversation and questioning effectively to help children improve their speaking skills. As a result of these strengths, school records and local authority information indicate that children get off to a flying start in their first two years at school.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work have improved to the extent that there is now very little disruption to learning. Their ability to work independently and collaborate in groups makes a significant contribution to their better achievement. Pupils enjoy learning much more than they did before improvements to teaching and the curriculum were introduced and this is reflected in much better attendance figures in most classes. There remains a very small minority of pupils whose behaviour is challenging; however, staff have been trained to respond to this in a constructive and consistent way, therefore there is little loss of learning time.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have formed a strong partnership in leading improvements in pupils' achievement. They systematically monitor the quality of teaching and, where required, they give teachers constructive support and guidance to help them improve their work. They keep detailed records of the progress of all groups of pupils and use these effectively to pinpoint which of them are not achieving enough and, therefore, need more support. Their short-term plans for improving achievement are focused accurately on the most significant weaknesses and they provide appropriate practical strategies for tackling them.

The support that senior leaders receive from their middle leadership teams is making a strong contribution to the accelerating rate of improvement. Middle leaders are effective teachers; therefore they are well placed to provide guidance to colleagues on what works best in helping pupils to achieve well. They have a positive influence on the quality of teaching across the school by leading training sessions and by supporting individual colleagues where required. Their work has brought about significant improvements in the everyday assessment of pupils' progress to inform next steps in learning, which is one of the school's key development priorities.

The school's partnership with parents and carers is growing strongly. Many attend school events to learn about what their children are doing and how they can support this at home. At a recent, very well attended, art afternoon some parents and carers left written feedback that they were pleased with their children's progress and with the overall improvement in the school. These views are supported by the inspection evidence.

The Interim Executive Board is very well informed about the strengths and remaining weaknesses in the school. They ask searching questions to ascertain that pupils' achievement is improving and they provide strong support to school leaders in managing staffing difficulties effectively. 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. In partnership with senior leaders and the Interim Executive Board they keep the school under close review and have a very good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They are providing effective support in the appointment of suitable teachers to fill the forthcoming vacancies. They have reduced their involvement in improving teaching, having correctly recognised the growing capacity of school leaders to do this independently.