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12 July 2013

Mr Darren Dudman
Headteacher
Ripon Cathedral C of E School
Priest Lane
Ripon
North Yorkshire
HG4 1LT

Dear Mr Dudman

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ripon Cathedral C of E School

Following my visit with Rosemary Batty, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 July 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 December 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.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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, the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire and the diocese of Ripon and Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching to be consistently good or better by:
 - dealing with inadequate teaching robustly
 - setting work at the right level for all groups of pupils
 - developing effective methods for teaching basic skills in different subjects in Key Stage 2
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils know how to improve their work and are given time to do so
 - planning lessons that capture pupils' interest and allow them to make choices about their learning.

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring targets are based on an accurate understanding of pupils' needs and are regularly reviewed with pupils and parents so that pupils make at least comparable progress to pupils nationally
 - checking individual pupils' progress, and that of groups, regularly to ensure those who are not doing as well as they should are identified quickly and swift action is taken to boost their progress.

- Improve the ability of leaders at all levels to make lasting improvements by:
 - implementing a rigorous programme to check and improve the quality of teaching
 - clarifying leadership roles and responsibilities so all staff contribute to school improvement
 - ensuring that actions and ways of measuring success in the school's improvement plans are focused on improving pupils' achievement.

- Improve the governing body's knowledge of the school's work and how well pupils are doing, so that they can hold school leaders to account for improving pupils' achievement.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 July 2013.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and four members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. The inspectors also spoke with some parents.

Context

Since the previous inspection, three teachers have been appointed and took up their posts on 1 April 2013 replacing those who left on 31 March 2013. One of the new teachers is an assistant headteacher who also has responsibility for pupils with special educational needs. Two additional governors have been appointed which brings the governing body to its full complement.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books during the monitoring inspection indicate that pupils make uneven progress throughout the school. Provisional results for the current Year 6 pupils and school records show that their results, in national tests, are likely to be lower this year than in 2012. Throughout the school, boys generally are making better progress than that of girls but there are classes where boys make limited progress in reading. Despite a concerted attempt to ensure that the quality of all pupils' writing improves, this is yet to become apparent. Pupils with special educational needs make similarly uneven progress in line with their peers.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 2 show that improvements made in reading, writing and mathematics by all pupils last year have been sustained and improved, despite some underachievement by lower ability pupils in particular.

Pupils who are supported by the government's pupil premium funding are making better progress than previously and the gap between them and their peers is closing in most classes. This is because teachers are more aware of these pupils' capabilities so that they can be given additional help where needed and their progress is closely monitored.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive strong teaching and work in a stimulating and exciting environment, enjoy the different activities provided which promotes language and numeracy skills particularly well. As a result all children move forward well in their learning, girls more rapidly than boys.

The quality of teaching

Inspectors saw some pockets of very strong teaching where pupils make rapid progress because they are all engaged and because their capabilities are well known they are given appropriate work. Questioning is detailed and regular checks are made to ensure pupils understand what they are learning. Lessons move along briskly, teaching assistants have a precise role and time is not wasted.

Not enough lessons though are of this quality and even where teaching is strong the marking in pupils' books is not rigorous and detailed enough to promote high standards. Pupils understand the 'green pen' system and often respond to teachers' comments and corrections. However, basic spelling and grammar mistakes are often missed because the teacher's marking is focusing on a particular piece of work only. Although pupils and parents welcome the new approach to teaching subjects other than literacy and numeracy, insufficient attention is given, at present, to promoting and improving pupils' basic skills.

The variable quality of teaching that exists and was agreed during joint observations, contributes significantly to the uneven progress made by all pupils. Too often, although teachers have detailed information about pupils' capabilities, they are not given work that meets their needs well enough. Pupils conscientiously do what they are told, but where explanation and the tasks are muddled, pupils, especially those who are more-able, make no progress because mistakes and misconceptions are not corrected.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils conduct themselves around the school sensibly. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils were keen to talk with inspectors about life at the school. Many lessons enable pupils to work collaboratively and to share ideas. Inspectors saw that they do this well. Nevertheless when work is too easy or too difficult for pupils, they become disengaged, start to day dream or chat with their friends.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection and the appointment of another assistant headteacher in April 2013, the pace of improvement has begun to accelerate. Job descriptions have been clarified and leaders are clear what is expected of them. Literacy and numeracy subject leaders are presenting information to governors and the meetings between leaders and class teachers to discuss pupil progress are well documented and take place regularly. Checking the quality of teaching and looking at pupils' books takes place systematically. The strengths and weaknesses noted during these activities were agreed with inspectors. Procedures for monitoring

activities are thus in place, but ensuring how issues picked up during meetings, plus interventions for pupils and how external courses and training for teacher's impact on pupils' progress, are not yet evident.

Membership of the governing body is now complete and committees meet regularly to review the work of the school and the progress being made toward the removal of special measures. The knowledge and educational know-how of governors enables them to challenge leaders and understand the difficulties to be overcome. They check the progress being made by different groups of pupils regularly and visit classes and talk to teachers to see if initiatives introduced are being used in the classroom and if they are having an impact.

External support

The Education Development Adviser (EDA) from the local authority visits regularly. Previous consultant-work by literacy and numeracy EDAs is coming to an end. The support plan, provided by the local authority, which sets out a December 2013 ambitious target for the school to become good, no longer reflects the key issues for the school as clearly indicated in the section 5 inspection report. It is not helpful to school leaders and governors if this document is then used by the local authority to check the progress being made by the school. Although many of the issues in the local authority's support plan have been checked by the EDA, the document is mainly descriptive and does not include regular quantifiable targets.

Priorities for further improvement

No further priorities were identified during this monitoring inspection.