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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 to your school on 20 and 21 November 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 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection subject to the establishment of the comprehensive mentoring arrangements discussed with the lead inspector.

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 third monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 November 2013

Evidence

During the inspection the inspector observed teaching and learning in each of the school's nine classes, including the Early Years Foundation Stage unit and additional sessions aimed at boosting the numeracy and literacy skills of pupils with special educational needs. The inspector examined pupils' books and samples of their work and assessed their behaviour in and out of lessons. He interviewed school leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two local authority representatives. He talked to pupils and reviewed the school's action plans and monitoring and evaluation records of pupils' academic performance and the quality of teaching.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection the school has appointed a head of school, a new assistant headteacher, a 'behaviour for learning' coordinator and an assessment coordinator. A new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has also been installed. Three new governors have been elected and there has been some internal redeployment of teaching assistants. A Year 1 teacher is still absent through illness. Two supply teachers are supporting learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2013 unvalidated end of Year 6 national test results are mostly higher than those in 2012 and show that during their time in the school pupils' achievement was broadly average overall when set against their starting points. The fast progress they made in their final year compensating somewhat for their prior underachievement. There was also a big increase in the numbers of pupils gaining the higher levels of attainment in reading and mathematics. However, the performance of girls and pupils' achievement in writing were well below average. The 2013 unvalidated end of Year 2 national tests results are also higher than those in 2012 in terms of pupils' overall attainment and the numbers of them gaining the higher levels with the exception of writing and girls' performance across the board.

The proportion of children reaching a good stage of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2013 was close to the national average. However, the deficit between pupils' performance in the national Year 1 phonics test and the national average grew. There were wide disparities between the performances of girls in this school and pupils supported by the pupil premium and their counterparts in other schools nationally.

Elsewhere in the school, the latest tracking data indicate that generally pupils' achievement continues to improve and their attainment is rising with more of them reaching or exceeding age-related expectations because of the accelerated progress they are making. There are exceptions for certain subjects, groups of pupils and year groups, such as mathematics, girls and Year 5, which the school is addressing through targeted intervention strategies. So, notwithstanding the ground gained, the remaining variability in outcomes illustrates the significant work the school still has to do to ensure all pupils' achievement is good or better in all of their subjects. Pupils are invariably still trying to 'catch up' to where they should be had they not underachieved previously and have insufficient time as yet to close the gap.

The quality of teaching

During the inspection further improvements were observed in the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. Credit must go to those staff who regularly 'produce the goods' and the staff who are working incredibly hard to put into practice the strategies and routines they have gleaned from the wide-ranging professional development they are receiving. New teachers have got off to a 'flying start' and the redeployed teaching assistants were seen having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school's commitment to: offering pupils more challenging, engaging and experiential learning opportunities; raising expectations of presentation; regularly checking pupils' understanding of newly taught concepts skills and correcting any misconceptions; and extending pupils' learning with apt homework is paying dividends and is reflected in the faster progress most of them are making and the increased pride in their work. The school recognises that there is still work to do to iron out the remaining less-effective aspects of teaching including eradicating those triggers which can cause pupils' progress to slow or lead pupils to become distracted or disinterested and not missing opportunities to reinforce or model accurate speaking and communication skills.

The assessment, mathematics, literacy and special educational needs coordinators are collecting, evaluating and disseminating a wealth of teaching and academic performance intelligence data derived from their monitoring data, which staff are using to identify, and to intervene to support more quickly and appropriately, pupils 'at risk' or already making slower progress. The embedding of pupils' 'learning journeys' and providing more evaluative marking and feedback to pupils throughout the school is improving parents' and carers', staff and pupils' understanding of how well pupils are performing against their targets and the specific literacy and numeracy areas they need to work on to improve further.

The efficiency of the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve and the quality of planning, resources and teaching to actively support and promote each of the areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors, is increasing in quality. As a result, pupils have settled quickly and are making fast progress in their learning at this early stage. The steps taken to increase children's independence and confidence and stimulate their curiosity and creativity are bearing fruit. There is a suitable balance between child-initiated activities, guided discovery and more formal instruction to reinforce children's acquisition of key basic skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The 'behaviour for learning' coordinator has established a range of activities to engage pupils more productively at social times. Zoned areas and class rotas minimise the possibility of disputes and play leaders help to marshal events suitably. Scrutiny of behaviour logs show the overall number of incidents is falling, but the same few perpetrators feature regularly. In classrooms pupils behaved well and showed positive attitudes to learning with the 'golden rules' being adhered to more consistently.

While attendance over the past year slipped further below the national average, since pupils returned to school in September their attendance is higher. The school is becoming more proactive in promoting good attendance and challenging pupils who are persistently absent or late. A weekly attendance prize that is fiercely contested, home visits and stronger links with external support agencies, such as the educational welfare officer, are helping matters.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The first-class leadership of the executive headteacher is driving school improvement effectively. She is skilfully and systematically creating the conditions within which the school can not only recover but begin to flourish. Her expertise, high expectations and ability to motivate and nurture staff is exemplified by the talented team of senior leaders she has assembled. They feel empowered and accountable, and share her clear vision and ambitions for the school's future. The early indications are that they are proving adept at facilitating improvements in their respective areas of responsibility. Leaders' collective impact is evident in the improving profile of teaching and the consequent improvement in many pupils' achievement. It is also reflected in the tangible changes to the school's culture, organisation and the learning environment, which are helping the school to rid itself of the impediments that led to it being placed in special measures.

The changes made to the curriculum are becoming embedded and pupils are responding positively to the emphasis on giving them more first-hand experiences, independence and responsibility for leading their own learning and the wider opportunities available, such as working with specialist artists and musicians and participating in major competitions.

The school's website appears more user-friendly and 'geared' more towards parents and carers and pupils than was the case previously with a dedicated parents' link to interesting items, such as newsletters, examples of pupils' work and key curriculum information.

The exceptionally well-organised and efficient Chair of the Governing Body continues to support governors' development and their capacity to challenge senior leaders strategically about the effectiveness of their work to improve the quality of education the school offers. Scrutiny of governing body minutes indicate that more governors are actively involved in the visits to observe the school 'in action', reviewing pupils' progress, and interrogating thoroughly before adopting new procedures, such as the new pay and appraisal policy.

The challenge facing the school is to sustain the good momentum created and to eradicate the remaining weaker aspects of provision and outcomes so that there is unequivocal evidence that the school no longer requires special measures. The inspector acknowledges that there is an unmistakable desire to 'do whatever it takes' to transform the quality of education the school provides from inadequate to at least good that is articulated by staff at all levels of the school. Time will tell whether they are able to achieve this ambitious target. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of continuing improvement against each of the areas identified as shortcomings at the section 5 inspection in November 2012.

External support

The partner school continues to provide some high-quality support and guidance relating to teaching and leadership. The local authority relationship with the school has evolved from intensive direct intervention when the school first went into special measures to more of a monitoring and evaluative role as the school begins to demonstrate its increasing capacity to improve itself. The local authority carried out a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage unit recently and judged the quality of provision to be good with outstanding features.