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Mrs B Nixon and Mrs E Clark
Edlington Victoria Primary School
Victoria Road
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Doncaster
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Dear Mrs Nixon and Mrs Clark

Special measures monitoring inspection of Edlington Victoria Primary School

Following my visit with Beverly Clubley, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 January 2016, 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 February 2015. 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may 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 and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Education Board and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Urgently improve teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, so that it is consistently good or better and ensures that pupils in all year groups make at least good progress in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - questioning is used well to check on learning so that tasks can be reshaped when pupils have not fully understood the concepts being taught
 - all staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - the work set is appropriately challenging for all pupils, but particularly for the most able, and that pupils do not repeat work they have already successfully completed
 - the work of learning support assistants is carefully planned and is consistently effective
 - children in the early years are helped to develop their ideas when they are working by themselves.

- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics specifically by making sure that:
 - all teaching staff model precisely the sounds that letters make in their teaching of phonics
 - pupils develop the reading skills they need to help them elicit the right information to best support the topics they are exploring
 - pupils develop a secure understanding of number and place value and the application of calculations when solving problems
 - teachers' marking and feedback clearly tell pupils about how to improve their work further, including identifying basic errors in their writing and that pupils have the time they need to respond to that marking
 - pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics when working in other subjects.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - the monitoring of teaching is rigorous and accurate and leads to swift improvements to the quality of teaching
 - the skills of middle leaders are urgently improved so that they can rigorously monitor provision in their areas of responsibility and secure essential improvements
 - teacher assessments accurately reflect what pupils can do and inform subsequent planning
 - pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs receive effective support which is closely monitored and enables them to make at least good progress

- the learning and progress of the disadvantaged pupils is effectively supported and closely monitored so that those who are at risk of falling behind are identified quickly and given the help they need to achieve well
- governors play a more active role in leading school developments and checking that these secure good achievement for all pupils
- school leaders, including governors, monitor the impact of those funds specifically designated for the support of disadvantaged pupils
- governors implement the recommendations of the review of governance that they have recently undertaken.

A further external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 January 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Executive Headteacher, the head of school, middle leaders, a representative from the local authority and members of the Interim Education Board (IEB). They looked at pupils' work in books and observed 14 parts of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils in a meeting at lunchtime and around school.

Context

The school continues to be supported by Hilltop Primary School in Edlington. The Executive Headteacher is the headteacher at Hilltop Primary School. The IEB has delegated powers for the governance of Edlington Victoria Primary School and is seeking to form an academy trust with Hilltop. Since the last monitoring visit, one teacher has left the school and has been replaced by a long-term supply teacher.

Outcomes for pupils

Increasing numbers of pupils across school are now working at levels expected for their age. Two thirds of children are now well positioned to attain good levels of development by the time they leave Reception, so that attainment in early years will be broadly in line with national averages. This means that 20% more children are better prepared to learn when they reach Year 1.

Pupils are making expected progress in Key Stage 1 and many more pupils are now attaining levels expected in writing and mathematics. Too few pupils are at expected levels in reading and, as a result, leaders have introduced changes to how reading is taught. Although attainment in Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) is still below national figures, 20% more pupils are now working at expected levels.

Progress of current pupils in Key Stage 2 continues to improve. School assessment information shows that around three quarters of pupils are working at expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress is currently stronger in writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils in several year groups are achieving less well than other pupils and leaders have put into place bespoke lessons to ensure this group of pupils is supported to achieve more.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Where teachers are routinely implementing changes instigated by leaders, better teaching is beginning to emerge. Some teachers are more successfully using assessment to plan lessons that meet the needs of different groups of pupils, and expectations of the work that pupils will do are increasing. Teachers are implementing more practical learning in lessons, particularly in mathematics,

contributing to improved progress by some pupils. In successful writing lessons, teachers are providing pupils with improved resources to support budding writers.

Teachers are implementing new ways of checking on pupils' progress. The accuracy of assessment in reading is currently less secure than in writing or mathematics, leading to some unusual results in reading. Teachers' work to improve the quality of marking and feedback they provide for pupils is resulting in greater consistency and is helping pupils to make improvements.

However, in some classes, inconsistencies remain in the application of some agreed ways of working. Inconstant expectations are leading to differences in the daily diet of pupils in similar age classes, and fluctuations in the quality of work produced. This is very evident in the quality of writing and handwriting in both key stages. It is clear from pupils' books, particularly in upper Key Stage 2, that there are too many occasions when pupils have not had sufficient time to show and apply their learning.

Teachers' questioning of pupils to deepen their understanding is variable. Some teachers are ably supporting their pupils to think more deeply about their learning, but this is not always the case and some staff are missing opportunities to challenge and extend pupils' understanding.

The teaching of reading needs to be strengthened in order for pupils to enjoy and fully comprehend the material they are being given. Not enough thought is being given to appropriate questions during guided reading sessions and in Key Stage 1 there are insufficient planned opportunities for high-quality talk causing some pupils, boys in particular, to find reading difficult.

Where teaching is well planned and teacher knowledge is strong, pupils are writing using complex sentences and adventurous vocabulary to good effect. However, in some classes, teachers are not planning sequences of lessons that help pupils to build up their skills or offering sufficient opportunities to learn and rehearse the use of new vocabulary. Consequently, pupils are not always writing as successfully as they might because they are struggling to find the words.

Leaders have correctly identified teaching and learning in mathematics as the area for improvement this term and have planned a series of staff meetings to help teachers to develop their confidence and subject knowledge. Teachers are planning a variety of activities helping pupils to apply reasoning skills. However, it is clear from pupils' books that some teachers have been unable to identify and unpick pupils' misconceptions to prevent pupils making the same mistakes again. Some stronger practice is emerging in early years and in Key Stage 2. In a lesson observed on the teaching of place value, as a result of strong teacher knowledge and effective planning, pupils successfully learned how to order numbers to four decimal places.

The impact of learning support assistants on pupils' learning is still too variable. Often this is linked to the quality of teachers' planning for how they will support pupils. The confidence and subject knowledge of some learning support assistants is

not sufficiently developed to enable them to ask pupils appropriate follow-up questions or to extend their learning.

Leaders have provided significant mentoring to help teachers to develop provision to better meet the needs of children in the early years. As a result, teaching, particularly in Reception, is helping children to make more rapid progress. Teachers are using assessment well to plan the next steps in learning for children and 'learning journals' accurately reflect the stage of development of children and evidence the progress they are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are increasingly enjoying school and there is a tangible difference in the learning atmosphere around Victoria Primary. Pupils express their learning using some of the language encouraged by teachers, for example to be 'resilient rhinos' or 'collaborating cobras'. When pupils are continually reminded of these expected learning behaviours, they are trying hard to achieve them. One pupil proudly told me he had received a token for being a 'resilient rhino' during a swimming lesson. However, in some classes, learning language is not as well developed and some pupils are not learning as well as they might in order to achieve best progress. Some unkindness between pupils can still be observed, although staff are very quick to deal with this.

The work of all staff to develop relationships with parents and with the community is having a positive impact. Reading records show that more parents are supporting their children in hearing them read and more understand the importance of homework.

The pastoral and intervention manager works closely with external agencies to safeguard vulnerable pupils. As a result of her work, a stronger safeguarding culture is prevalent in school. The IEB has recently commissioned a higher fence to improve security around the Key Stage 2 playground.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The Executive Headteacher and head of school are very capable and well able to lead improvements in teaching and learning. They have a detailed knowledge of attainment and progress within school and this is helping them to determine the priorities for improving the school. Leaders have rigorously overhauled the policies and procedures that guide teaching so that it is clear to all staff what is expected of them. Staff have still to work through some of the challenges presented by new assessment procedures recently implemented by leaders. Leaders acknowledge that eradicating in-school variations in quality and practice are essential if the pace of improvement is to be sustained.

Regular monitoring by senior leaders is having the impact of gradually improving teaching at the chalk face. A targeted training programme has been devised to

target areas of weakness identified through monitoring. Following on from intensive work to improve writing, staff are now focusing on improving teaching and learning in mathematics. The head of school has put considerable time into coaching, working alongside some teachers and helping them to develop.

The effectiveness of middle leaders remains variable as they are at the early stages of leading their subjects. Although they are growing in confidence to evaluate work in books, middle leaders are not always able to identify what it is they need to do to improve teaching in the subjects they lead. The work of phase leaders to support teachers is not sufficiently rigorous and is leading to inconsistency. As a result, pupils in parallel classes are not always receiving teaching of the same quality, and learning is not as rapid for all groups of pupils in a year group.

The IEB is highly effective in giving school leaders the strong direction they need. Through regular visits and information supplied to them by school leaders, governors have a detailed knowledge of the work of the school. IEB members meet with parents, gauging opinion and bringing this to bear on further actions taken to improve the school. They have been actively brokering a formal partnership with Hilltop Primary and are moving steadily towards forming an academy trust in summer 2016. The review of governance, undertaken in December 2015, was very positive in its appraisal of the effectiveness of the IEB. They have implemented the recommendation to reduce the number of meetings held to enable school leaders to show the impact of their work between meetings.

External support

The local authority has been effective in the support and challenge it provides to the school. Half-termly reviews of teaching and learning and regular and responsive mentoring provided to the Executive Headteacher by the local authority officer have assisted school leaders in reflecting on the impact of their work. The local authority officer has met regularly with members of the IEB, providing an independent and informed view of the progress the school is making. The local authority has licensed an over-spend by the IEB to purchase essential reading and computer equipment. A plan is in place to recover this funding in a structured way.