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Mr I R Williamson
Headteacher
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23 November 2005

Dear Mr Williamson,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF RAWTHORPE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in April 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

An assembly and 11 lessons were inspected, and the pupils' conduct was observed around the school and at lunchtime. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the associate deputy headteacher, a Year 6 teacher and representatives from the local authority. A range of documentation was examined.

Context

There have been few changes of staff over the summer; this contrasts with the school's recent history, when there has been considerable instability. The deputy

headteacher has been seconded to work in another Kirklees school until Easter 2006. The number on roll has fallen to 195. Around half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, a proportion that is three times the national average.

Achievement and standards

The school's results in the 2005 national tests for Year 6 pupils were poorer than those for 2004. In English 60 %% of the pupils reached the target Level 4 or above, compared with 73%% in the previous year; the respective proportions in mathematics were 52 and 53 %% , and in science 63 and 78 %% . A smaller proportion of pupils also reached the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics, though there was a slight rise at this level in science.

A quarter of the pupils who took the tests joined the school after Year 3 so part of their Key Stage 2 education was elsewhere. Nevertheless, the pupils as a whole made below-average progress during the key stage. Their gains were poorer than those of the pupils who took the tests in 2004, but better than those for 2003. There was little variation in the progress made by the different groups of pupils. However, those whose first language is not English fared well, making progress that was higher than average.

The picture in lessons was more positive than the recent national test results. The pupils paid better attention than previously to applying basic skills, such as punctuating sentences and setting out their working in mathematics. Their progress was at least satisfactory in all but one lesson; it was good in half the lessons. Based on assessments and test results, the school believes that the targets for the current Year 6, of around 70 %% of pupils achieving Level 4, are realistic.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' attendance rate for 2004-5 was disappointing; it was 92.6 %% , compared with a national average of 94.6 %. However, the figure for the first half of the autumn term, 93.9 %, is more encouraging. It reflects the considerable efforts that are being made to raise attendance, such as rewards, contact with home when a pupil's absence is unexplained, and the work of the learning mentor and education welfare service in following up concerns.

The school's approach to managing behaviour was reviewed in July and has met with success. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of pupils referred to the inclusion suite for misconduct, and there have been many fewer exclusions this term when compared with the same period a year ago.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good or outstanding in half the lessons and satisfactory in the other half. This represents further improvements and confirms the school's evaluation. There were very few instances of misbehaviour. At best, the pupils knew exactly what was expected, settled without fuss, and were keen to answer the teacher's questions. In other lessons, the pupils needed reminders to listen or tidy their equipment, but they readily did as they were told. It was rare for

pupils to speak out of turn. At break-time, there was much purposeful play on the yard, though pupils still needed close supervision in order to enter school and class in an orderly fashion. Assembly was a lively and thought-provoking occasion, with humorous presentations that would have been impractical a year ago. The pupils responded with enjoyment but in a mature way.

There are several indications that the parents' confidence in school has continued to rise. Views in questionnaires have been positive, pupils are no longer being withdrawn in favour of other local schools, and there was a healthy turnout at a recent evening for parents to consult about their children's progress. Parents have been kept well informed about school events and the curriculum, and are encouraged to visit school, for instance to join workshops and courses.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in April 2004:

- improve the pupils' behaviour, attendance and punctuality – *satisfactory*
- strengthen the school's partnership with parents – *satisfactory*

Quality of provision

The approaches that have led to a steady improvement in teaching and learning have been maintained. These have involved regular observations of lessons by the senior staff and the local authority, checks on planning and the pupils' work by lead teachers, specific support on areas of weakness and further training. The school's system for analysing test results and tracking pupils' progress is also being used effectively to identify pupils and areas of work that need additional help.

The quality of teaching was outstanding in two lessons, good in four, satisfactory in four and inadequate in one. This represents a considerable improvement when compared with the visit in June, especially in eliminating inadequate teaching. All the lessons were well planned, prepared and organised, and based on clear learning objectives that were shared with the pupils. Additional adults generally contributed well, especially in leading small groups. Most lessons were briskly paced, with all the pupils expected to offer answers when the class was being taught as a whole.

The better teaching was marked out by high expectations, well-understood routines and continual checks to ensure that the pupils were learning what was intended. In the weaker lessons, time was lost in the central sections because some pupils were allowed to waste time chattering or slowly copying out the title and date. The inadequate teaching stemmed from a failure to recognise and remedy the mistakes being made by a significant number of pupils.

Many of the pupils have learned good work habits but this is not consistent. In some classes, lessons run like clockwork, and pupils gather books and equipment in anticipation of what is to happen next. In other classes, the pupils have to be told what to do at each stage of the lesson and this detracts from their learning and how much they produce.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in April 2004

- improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning – *satisfactory*

Leadership and management

There have been well-considered adjustments to the roles of the senior team, partly to allow for the secondment of the deputy headteacher to another school. Good moves have also been made to increase delegation, thus expanding the range of management expertise within the school. This has been complemented by training on the role of the subject leader.

Governors' meetings have been affected by the failure of some members to attend, but there is an active core and the agendas reflect an appropriate concern to check on the school's performance and progress. Governors have also joined a newly formed group that is heading the drive to raise standards.

The school's results in the 2005 national tests have been analysed and action is being taken accordingly. This forms part of the school's well-judged and updated plans to deal with the key issues from 2004, as well as specific plans for literacy and numeracy. The agendas for meetings of the full staff and the senior team have been well directed at the school's priorities.

The key aspects of the school's work are being monitored thoroughly. For example, planning and pupils' work in literacy and numeracy are being scrutinised on a fortnightly basis, with feedback given to staff. This approach is proving effective, in the way that teachers insist on a better standard of presentation and more work from the pupils.

Improvements in behaviour this term have raised the staff's morale, allowing the teachers to focus more on the pupils' learning and less on their conduct. This has also enabled senior staff to spend more of their time on strategic matters, rather than dealing with incidents of misbehaviour.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in April 2004:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance in raising achievement – *good*

External support

The local authority has provided good and extensive support to the school. This has involved help over provision for pupils with special educational needs, the role of the co-ordinators, the quality of teaching, and monitoring. The link inspector has also reviewed the school's progress with the headteacher and discussed the outcomes with governors.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– *satisfactory*

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *good*

Priorities for further improvement

The school's priorities remain those identified at its inspection in 2004 and represented in the termly action plans.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Lifelong Learning for Kirklees.

Yours sincerely

J S Hardwick
H M Inspector of Schools