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Mr Thorp
Acting Headteacher
Oakridge Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Thorp

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Oakridge Community Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit with Mr Parker, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 July 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, groups of pupils and parents, the chair of governors and four other members of the governing body, the school's literacy and numeracy coordinators, the school's improvement partner and the local authority support adviser.

Context

The headteacher has resigned since the last monitoring visit. The acting headteacher will leave at the end of this term and a new headteacher has been appointed for September. One of the three teachers has resigned to take up a new post from September and a temporary appointment has been made to fill this post. Another

teacher will leave in December. The appointment process to fill this vacancy will begin shortly.

Achievement and standards

Standards have improved and are now satisfactory. Pupils are making good progress. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress are well established and show clearly that most pupils make good progress towards their identified targets. When progress falls short of this, the school intervenes to help pupils catch up. The recent national statutory test results were arriving in school at the time of the monitoring visit and these confirm that standards are now satisfactory in both key stages. The school is aware of which areas it is focusing on next, for example, writing in Year 4.

In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress and standards are good by the end of Year 2, especially in mathematics. In Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory or better in all subjects, though slower in mathematics. The school's data indicate that progress in Key Stage 2 is strongest in science. In English, pupils make better progress in reading than in writing. Most noticeable progress is being made in Year 5. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils are now making good progress but still have ground to catch up from previous disruption to staffing. In Year 6, good work has been done to address gaps in previous learning and the 2007 national test results are satisfactory.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Raise levels of achievement in Year 1 to Year 6 - good progress

Personal development and well-being

This aspect was judged to be satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and in subsequent monitoring visits. It is now good. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. This is because pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. Teachers and support staff create positive relationships and use well-established routines to support good behaviour and to foster positive attitudes to learning. Pupils explain that more lessons are fun, though they would like to see an even greater improvement. They also feel that they are making better progress because the work is less repetitive and they have to work hard almost all of the time.

The improvement in basic skills, better opportunities for using information and communication technology (ICT), and the increased focus on independent learning are providing good preparation for success in the next stage of pupils' education and in their adult life. Pupils particularly enjoy the additions to the curriculum, such as the arts week, specialist science teaching and expert sports coaching. They feel safer, as behaviour at playtimes is better. The substantially improved play equipment has enabled pupils to play more constructively. This has also increased their

opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles and pupils are taking full advantage of this.

The school council is busily communicating pupils' opinions about how the school can improve. There are other good ways in which pupils contribute, by helping younger children in the dining room, for example, and through supporting community activities.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Make sure pupils are safe and happy in school - good progress

Quality of provision

The curriculum is satisfactory and is much improved since the last monitoring visit. Considerable additional resources have been purchased to support the work in lessons in science, numeracy, literacy and art. There has been an appropriately strong focus on raising standards in core subjects, but other aspects of the curriculum are not being neglected to do this. A new focus has been established on handwriting.

Excellent links with other schools, out-of-school visits, and visitors into school have enhanced the curriculum further. For example, a hugely enjoyable arts week and a school drama production this term have added to the creative dimension of the curriculum. Subjects are beginning to be integrated more so that they link together and learning is reinforced. The additional ICT resources allow pupils to practise and develop their skills in different subjects, using graphics, for example, to present work in arts week. The school is looking at how the curriculum is planned when different year groups are taught together in one class, in order to avoid repetition.

The quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve and is largely good. Where it remains satisfactory, it is because teaching approaches are not sufficiently varied. This means that some higher-attaining boys do not always remain engaged and challenged throughout the lesson. The way that the teaching team is working together to improve means that teachers are aware of this limitation and are trying different ways to deal with it. In the good lessons, teachers' planning is very thorough and matches work more effectively to pupils' abilities so that lessons are interesting and the work requires sustained effort.

All teachers now provide imaginative activities that include a range of different approaches to learning. The improvement to resources, particularly for creative work and ICT, has given teachers access to a wider range of teaching strategies to use in the classroom. Teachers have also developed their practice by working with more

experienced colleagues from a partner school. These improvements ensure that pupils show good attitudes to work and make good progress overall. Pupils who have more difficulty are given carefully planned additional support. Teachers and a linked governor monitor the impact of this support very carefully.

In the Foundation Stage, the adults seek to make pupils independent and responsible and to develop skills in working collaboratively, all of which will be useful in later years. This focus on independent thinking is now sustained across the school. Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught systematically through all lessons and there are good opportunities for pupils to use ICT.

The quality of care, support and guidance is now good. Arrangements to ensure pupils' safety are rigorous. Adults have developed good relationship with pupils so that they feel secure and enjoy their learning. They provide good support for pupils as they move on to secondary school. Parents are happy that their children are well cared for and that they can raise any concerns with the school, such as possible loss of momentum that might arise from impending staff changes.

Assessment has improved significantly and the school has good systems for tracking pupils' progress. Arrangements for marking pupils' work are more consistent so that they get clear feedback on how to improve. Pupils have clear targets. Progress towards these is checked very thoroughly and work is carefully pitched to build on this.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Build on the emerging strengths in teaching and eliminate the weaknesses so that pupils' learning is accelerated - good progress

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has provided excellent, energetic leadership to the school, enabling significant improvements to be made in many aspects of school life since the last monitoring visit and, overall, since the last inspection. There are clear development plans for the school. They set out priorities and timescales, and are written in a user-friendly way, which staff can easily follow and implement and which closely reflects the action points from the last inspection. Subject coordinators have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development and have been able to ensure considerable improvement in their areas of responsibility. There are now no areas of inadequacy in the school. All issues identified at the time of the last inspection, and the further points suggested at the last monitoring visit, have been successfully tackled.

Parents are satisfied and say that the school is vastly improved. Pupils enjoy school, as reflected in their improved attendance and their keen attitudes in class. The school is a happy place with a good and safe environment for learning. Additional training, mentoring and opportunities for sharing good practice in teaching have helped to build teamwork amongst the staff. Good improvements have been made to classroom areas, particularly to the Foundation/ Key Stage 1 class providing extended play areas which offer greater opportunities for a wider range of activities.

Governance is strong: governors support and challenge the school well. Relationships with parents and the local community are excellent, with close involvement of the school's governors and regular events in and out of school which bring parents, staff and pupils together. Parents say that the school welcomes their views and their assistance. They have confidence in the existing staff team.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate, but documentation supplied to the inspectors did not flag up the staffing changes due imminently and at the end of the next term. These recent announcements have concerned parents, who have confidence in the existing staff team. The reason the school cannot be removed from special measures yet is because inspectors need to be sure that the current good performance of the school can be maintained. The priority for the next monitoring visit will be to check that the new staff can sustain the improvements made.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels (and make sure pupils are safe and happy in school) - outstanding progress
- Improve relationships with parents and the immediate community - outstanding progress

External support

The support provided by the local authority has been excellent. Links with a local partner primary school are well established and are flourishing, strongly fostered by the local authority. Advice and teaching expertise have been provided by specialist subject teachers, for example, in science, art and on curriculum planning. These initiatives have contributed considerably to the strengthening of teachers' skills and to the range of activities that pupils are able to undertake. Since the last monitoring visit, the local authority has significantly enhanced resources for core subjects and for other subjects. This has had a direct impact on pupils' enjoyment of lessons and, thus, on their progress. In April 2007, the school was allocated an improvement partner, an experienced headteacher who is able to provide further advice and guidance. She has visited the school and is working on the induction of the new headteacher. The improvement partner shows good awareness of the school's recent history and of its priorities for further improvement.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – outstanding

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Sustain the good rate of pupils' progress.
- Ensure the smooth transfer of responsibilities for core subjects from September 2007 and the successful induction of the new headteacher.
- Maintain the good quality of teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Honoree Gordon
H M Inspector