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23 March 2007

Miss L McLanachan
Headteacher
Intack Primary School
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Blackburn
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Dear Miss McLanachan,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF INTACK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Brian Dower and Barbara Hollingworth, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 21 and 22 March 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2006.

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

During the visit, 16 part lessons, one assembly and one registration session were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, some subject leaders, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority (LA). In addition, a meeting was held with school council representatives and informal discussions took place with other staff members and pupils. A range of documents was scrutinised and samples of pupils' work were examined.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in November 2006, actions taken by the headteacher have ensured that there are fewer teaching staff vacancies and less staff absence. The number of pupils at the school has remained relatively stable.

The range of extra-curricular activities available to pupils has been significantly increased and is proving to be very popular. In addition, family learning provision is now established.

Achievement and standards

Validated results for the national tests in 2006 confirm that standards are significantly below average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The results in reading and mathematics improved slightly at Key Stage 1 but writing declined, with only 24% of the pupils achieving the expected average Level 2. At Key Stage 2, the biggest improvement was in science, where 72% of the pupils achieved in line with national average. English however remains the area where the greatest improvement is required with just 48% of the pupils achieving the expected level. At both key stages few pupils reached the higher levels of achievement in reading, writing or mathematics.

The legacy of inadequate teaching and low expectations of pupils' capabilities has resulted in underachievement that is proving difficult to eradicate. However, there are signs that pupils' learning is beginning to improve, partly because the pupils are more prepared to listen and learn, and because of improvements in teaching and learning. The pupils in the Reception classes, for example, are now receiving a secure start to their schooling and developing their reading, writing and counting skills at a steady rate. There are also examples of pupils making satisfactory and good progress towards the end of Key Stage 2. Elsewhere, pupils' rate of progress is not as secure; consequently, any gains are not sustained.

The collection and analysis of assessment data are becoming established and the school now has a good range of evidence about pupils' attainment and progress. Managers are beginning to interrogate the data and some useful analyses have emerged which identify the strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' learning. This information however is not used effectively by all teachers when planning lessons in order to provide activities which match the needs of individual pupils.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- Significantly raise standards and pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy throughout the school – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to improve. Relationships between pupils and adults are mainly good. Behaviour is generally good and most pupils are beginning to enjoy learning. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their favourite lessons and their pride in receiving certificates in recognition of their good work and attitudes. Many pupils are growing in confidence, and increasing numbers readily tackle new learning and work independently when required. At Key Stage 1 however, the absence of established learning routines and a failure to capture pupils'

interest at the start of the lesson lead to some pupils becoming restless and disinterested.

The school is implementing a number of successful strategies to improve attendance and punctuality. One significant step forward is the developing partnership between the school and parents. In addition, some persistent poor attenders are now attending school more regularly.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- Continue to raise levels of attendance – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

There has been a satisfactory improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. It is mainly good in the Reception classes and most of upper Key Stage 2. In Years 1 to 3 however, whilst much is satisfactory and some is good, too much is inadequate.

Good teaching and learning occurs when assessment information is used well by teachers to provide activities which match the needs of differing ability groups and which build upon what pupils already know and can do. Work captures pupils' interest and engages them in stimulating and often active learning working alongside other pupils. These factors combined for example in a Year 6 class, when pupils worked in groups to solve problems about ratio and proportion by manipulating objects and testing out their ideas. They clearly enjoyed the work, were stimulated by it and took responsibility for completing tasks. The majority made good progress.

Inadequate lessons make inefficient use of time, lack urgency and do not sufficiently interest pupils, mainly because work is not matched their capabilities. There is a delay in starting lessons and disruption is caused by some pupils who are constantly inattentive and whose behaviour distracts others. Teachers find it difficult to gain sufficient control; low-level disruption remains constant throughout and limits pupils' progress. In lessons where the less able pupils do not receive enough attention and support they are often unsure about the purpose of their work and many struggle. For example, a group of lower attaining Year 1 pupils were expected to read about creatures such as the earthworm and the spider and then make notes about their characteristics. When questioned about why they were not completing their work, they replied that they could not read the texts. The teacher did not check on them to find out about the appropriateness of the work and consequently these pupils made no progress during the 25 minutes allotted to the task.

The school is implementing a range of programmes to address the gaps in the pupils' learning. These programmes are effective in tackling specific weaknesses, such as phonic knowledge, but the good progress pupils make in these groups is not always continued in class. This is because there are not always enough opportunities

to consolidate this learning in lessons and sometimes pupils also have a range of other needs which prevent them from applying their new learning effectively.

There are examples of appropriate marking which acknowledges effort and sometimes informs pupils of how well they are doing and what they need to do next. However, marking remains inconsistent and is not focused sufficiently on the learning objectives of the lesson or the pupils' targets.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do, including their capacity to work independently – satisfactory progress
- Ensure systems for marking pupils' work, tracking their progress and informing future targets are in place and consistently used across the school– satisfactory progress
- Ensure work set meets the needs of pupils and programmes to raise achievement are put into place – inadequate progress
- Urgently ensure all staff are trained in child-protection procedures– good progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have maintained their determination and impetus to improve the school and address its remaining weaknesses. They have improved staff morale, engendering a strong commitment to tackle the inspection issues and partake in school improvement activities. There is better engagement with parents and the school enjoys greater support from the wider community for its work. Overall, the school is a more orderly community; this is reflected in pupils' improved behaviour, more positive attitudes and a greater willingness by the majority of pupils to take responsibility for their actions and learning.

Senior leaders have revised the arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning. Observations are now carried out routinely and assessments are made against specific criteria devised by the school. This work is helping teachers to understand where they need to improve. It has also strengthened the senior leadership's understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school. While this marks an improvement, too much attention is directed during observations to the quality of teaching and not enough to the impact on pupils' learning or the outcomes they achieve. In addition, the observations are not precisely targeted on assessing teachers' success in tackling the weaknesses in pupils' performance which have been identified either by the school, through its assessment procedures, or from inspection findings. These remain significant tasks to be accomplished. Subject leaders demonstrate a firm commitment to raising standards. Expectations about their role have been established and this has brought greater clarity to their work. They have developed a good understanding of the progress which pupils make in the intervention groups and have recently started to track the impact of this work on pupils' learning in the classroom. As yet however, subject leaders do not routinely

monitor teaching and learning across the school and this restricts their understanding of the full impact of the intervention work on pupils' progress and achievement in their own subject areas.

The school's performance management system is now in place and individual teachers are set targets. Targets though are not directly related to the impact which individual teachers are expected to make towards resolving key inspection issues.

Governance continues to develop. Governors remain resolute and purposeful in their drive to improve the school. There is greater engagement with staff through links with individual classes and subject leaders. Consequently, governors are better informed about the school's work and are in a stronger position to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006.

- Develop the capacity of the school's leadership, and implement monitoring and evaluation to provide an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses – satisfactory progress

External support

The local authority (LA) continues to provide timely and effective help to the school. The direct intervention and support provided by its officers has decreased and more appropriately reflects the LA's expectation, and senior leadership's willingness, for the school take increasing responsibility for tackling its weaknesses. Consequently, the separation of responsibilities, between the school and the LA, for leading on improvements is more clearly defined and understood. The LA's main engagement is through the intensifying support programme, providing support for pupils for whom English is not their first language and monitoring the budget. The school continues to receive support from a consultant headteacher although this commitment is planned to reduce during the summer term.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Additional issue from previous monitoring visit:

- Make certain that all teachers use assessment information accurately when planning learning to ensure that activities provided meet the learning needs of all pupils and supports them to make progress in line with their capabilities – inadequate progress

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that when senior leaders and subject coordinators monitor and evaluate teaching and learning they focus precisely on the extent to which teachers are addressing weaknesses identified through the school's own analysis of pupils' performance and from inspection findings.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson
H M Inspector