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30 January 2007

Miss Dawn Foster
Headteacher
Greenside Primary School
Rockwood Hill Road
Greenside
Ryton
Tyne and Wear
NE40 4AX

Dear Miss Foster,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GREENSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 17-18 January 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 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

I observed 7 lessons, one assembly, the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the former acting headteacher, the chair of governors and a member of the governing body, and representatives from the Local Authority (LA).

Context

Since the school was placed in special measures in September 2006 there have been significant changes to the senior staff and other staff of the school. The acting headteacher ended her tenure at the end of December 2006. The previous headteacher and two other teachers have now left the school. A new headteacher

took up her post in January 2007. An acting deputy headteacher took up appointment in the second half of the autumn term and this appointment will run until August 2007. A part time reception class teacher took up temporary appointment with effect from January 2007.

The L A remains fully involved with the school. It has not withdrawn delegation of funding. The governing body, following recent elections, has now reached a full complement.

Achievement and standards

The inspection in September 2006 judged that overall standards were below average and achievement was inadequate. Since the inspection, there has been limited progress in this area. The school does not have a sufficiently accurate system to gauge the pupils' standards and levels of achievement, because as yet it has not introduced assessment of pupils' work that is supported by internal moderation or external validation.

The assessment which took place at the end of the autumn term 2006 in Key Stage 2, using optional national tests which were not moderated, will be of some use as a benchmark for the school. The results showed that standards attained and progress made by pupils remained well below what is expected and were inadequate. In particular, a high proportion of pupils have below average standards in writing. Teacher assessment in Key Stage 1, which was also not moderated, indicated results in line with national standards.

This term, the new headteacher has usefully gathered information about the levels at which all pupils are working in reading, writing and mathematics. This information has not been externally moderated to confirm its accuracy. Nevertheless, the unvalidated data does provide a record of teacher assessment, the accuracy of which can be judged in the future. There is a need now to introduce an improved system of assessing pupils' standards and progress, to obtain reliable results in judging what pupils have achieved and providing an accurate basis for guiding future progress.

The current system of target setting for pupils should also be reviewed. Given the proportion of pupils with below average attainment, the system does not provide sufficient challenge to pupils to close gaps in their learning and accelerate their progress.

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

- Raise standards in all subjects – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils show attitudes that are positive, cooperative and interested. They behave well around the school and in lessons. On the whole, there are good relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, the atmosphere in lessons is conducive to learning. Pupils enjoy their education. Attendance, as at the time of the previous inspection, remains satisfactory and there have been only a very few fixed-term exclusions.

Quality of provision

The previous inspection judged that teaching and learning was uneven in quality and inadequate overall. It found teaching was often satisfactory and sometimes good.

The acting headteacher, an experienced headteacher seconded by the LA from another school, provided the school with very good leadership and management during the autumn term 2006. She brought about improvements in behaviour and in the curriculum. Her monitoring of teaching and learning provides an accurate view of its quality and is a useful benchmark against which to judge improvement. The school is trying to improve the overall quality of teaching by tackling issues of staff capability, supported by the LA, and through other support provided by LA staff. There has also been far greater continuity in the school's staffing. Three newly qualified teachers joined the school in September 2006, just before the previous inspection. They have been supported well and have made good progress. Two will remain until the end of the summer term and the school will therefore have to continue to support them. In the light of the other demands on the school, no further newly qualified teachers should be appointed.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the school and the LA, most of the teaching observed during this visit was satisfactory, and ranged from good to inadequate. There remains a challenge to lift the overall quality of teaching to mainly good, in order to raise standards. On the whole, teachers planned well, but work to meet the different needs of pupils was less well planned, and was not given enough priority in lessons. As a result, expectations of pupils were not based sufficiently on knowledge of pupils' individual attainment. Guidance to pupils as to how they could achieve more, based on a robust system of assessment, also remains an area to improve.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher provided very good leadership and management during the autumn term. She reported clearly on the progress the school made in improving behaviour, changing staffing and reorganising the governing body, all of which have strengthened the school's capacity to improve. She put in place the foundations to help the school to improve.

The management structure was also strengthened following the previous inspection by the temporary appointment, as acting deputy headteacher, of an experienced

deputy headteacher from another school. She has taken over class responsibilities effectively and is contributing well to the overall management of the school. The appointment of the new headteacher adds further to the sound footing for the management of the school, compared to the fragile situation at the time of the previous inspection. The new headteacher is getting to know the school quickly. The particular initiative she plans to take forward is the introduction of a reliable system to assess pupils' standards and progress, which can also be used to guide their future learning. This visit has shown this to be essential in helping teachers and pupils focus more sharply on standards.

The school improvement plan provides a sound guide for the school to help it tackle the issues for improvement identified in the previous inspection. It would benefit from milestones, helping the school to prioritise actions to ensure it can build towards improvement progressively, and a sharper focus on evaluating the impact of planned actions.

The governing body, which assumed its duties just before the previous inspection as a new governing body, is now up to its full complement. Training from the LA for the governing body is proceeding. The governing body has effectively tackled the significant staffing matters arising from the previous inspection, and has appointed a new headteacher. It has also tackled other important matters relating to the school's future, including setting up plans for the autumn, where it is proposed a new class structure will be introduced to ensure the school can function within its budget.

The governing body has identified areas of their work which now need to be developed. The governors have listed the areas of the school they will monitor, and how they will begin to link to the school's work so they can gain first-hand experience of its quality; for example, governors may partner classes. They have a greater understanding of the areas where the school needs to improve, helped by the acting headteacher's reports, and they remain committed to the school's success and support it well in its efforts to improve. The next major area of development the governors recognise they have to embark on is to begin these first-hand links and develop a system for holding the school to account for the quality of its work.

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

- Establish clear and effective leadership at all levels to raise standards and improve the quality of educational provision – satisfactory progress
- Develop the skills of the new governing body so they can monitor the work of the school effectively, set a clear and achievable plan for improvement and hold all staff accountable for standards – satisfactory progress

External support

The LA statement of action is clearly set out and is focused well on the areas where the school needs to improve. All the main issues the school has to tackle are clearly

identified, and the support the LA will provide is well targeted to what needs to be improved, with clear indication of timescales, criteria to judge the impact of the support, and procedures for monitoring and evaluation. The support from the LA to the school has been extensive and good. It has included essential budget support which has helped the school to function now and to plan for the future. It has provided very good support in relation to staffing, seconding capable staff to take on acting leadership roles effectively. The LA is training governors, and has supported them well in improving the quality of staff working in the school. The support from the LA has been appreciated by the school and the governing body.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Quality of LA's statement of action - good

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Introduce a system of assessment, which includes internal moderation and external validation, to help to raise standards in all subjects.
- Lift the overall standard of teaching to be predominantly good, to help to raise standards in all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Gateshead LA.

Yours sincerely

Peter Harris
H M Inspector