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Mrs D Mann
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Dear Mrs Mann

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GRIMES DYKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Joan McKenna and Jane Hughes, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 14 and 15 March 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 October 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents and samples of pupils' work. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, key staff and pupils. Discussions also took place with two governors, representatives from Education Leeds and the pupil support mentor.

Context

Since the school became subject to special measures in October 2006 two new teachers and a higher level teaching assistant have been appointed. The school currently has a very large number of staff on temporary contracts.

Achievement and standards

Since the inspection in October 2006 there have been no significant improvements in pupils' overall standards and achievement. Standards in English, mathematics and science remain low. The number of pupils working below age-related expectations in some groups is significant. The school's data shows some areas of accelerated progress but overall it remains too slow throughout school. In lessons pupils' pace of learning is not consistent enough to boost their attainment and make up the gaps in their learning. However, those pupils working in target groups who receive additional help often make better progress than the others in the year group.

The significant underachievement of boys persists. The school has made a positive start in seeking ways to engage boys more in their learning to make better progress. Following discussions with older boys the school tried out various initiatives to raise standards in writing. These led to some improvements, particularly in the way boys took a keener interest in activities that provided them with a good stimulus for their writing. The quality of writing improved in lessons but these actions have yet to improve their achievement overall. Work continues: for example, the leader for numeracy is introducing a range of more imaginative resources with a view to motivating boys through practical activities and mathematical games.

The school has improved its systems for tracking pupils' progress across the school and identifying underachievement. Senior leaders are gaining a better picture of how well pupils are doing and whether they are on track to achieve as well as they should. This is enabling them to identify those pupils or groups of pupils who are falling behind and put additional support in place quicker than they have done in the past. Staff are being trained to increase their knowledge of pupils' expected attainment levels and to make more use of the data themselves to raise achievement. It is however too soon to see the impact of these actions.

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

- Raise achievement, particularly that of boys, in English, mathematics and science – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour and attitudes are improving overall, although pupils' behaviour and responses in lessons in Year 5 are still unpredictable and sometimes inadequate. Improvement in these areas is a result of clearer expectations and greater consistency in routines that stem directly from recent action plans. Adults generally take a consistent approach to behavioural issues. This includes midday staff, who ensure lunchtimes are pleasant, social occasions. The school excludes few pupils now. The new card systems to signal 'time out' of lessons for bad behaviour generally work well. Pupils are very confident with this system. However, the procedures to address more low level, unacceptable behaviour in lessons have yet to embed fully in all classes, particularly in Year 5. Pupils talk positively about the

new 'blue slips' but are not yet convinced of their consistent use by staff. Parents are increasingly encouraged to support their children's education. More are able to converse with their children about their targets and how they are getting on at school. This is helping to enthuse pupils about their schooling. Pupils in Year 6 are seeing the importance of regular and punctual attendance in terms of their future life choices. Pupils' attendance is improving slightly due to the school's persistent efforts, but it remains below average. There have been some successes with individuals and families but there are still a few families who resist the school's efforts. Therefore the fractured attendance patterns of some pupils continue to adversely affect their learning.

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

- Raise pupils' aspirations so that they want to attend school and believe that by attending they have the best possible chance to do well – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

been some improvement to teaching since the October inspection. However, not having a full complement of effective permanent teachers in post continues to affect its overall quality, with a consequent impact on pupils' learning. The strengths identified at the last inspection are still evident. Most teachers are effective practitioners with a good range of basic teaching skills. They manage their classes well and most ensure that pupils work hard throughout lessons. The aims of the work set are clearly explained and tasks are often successful in engaging pupils' interest. Most classrooms are bright and attractive environments in which to learn.

Positive developments since the last inspection include the new systems for improving behaviour, which are helping more teachers ensure that pupils cooperate and remain focused in lessons. There is more use of strategies which require pupils to be involved and to think for themselves, such as the use of 'talking partners', which is generally good. Pupils are given helpful aids to support their learning, such as information in their books on precisely what they must do to be successful. This is reinforced well through displays. There is greater use of targets so pupils know what they should be aiming for. These features are helping to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of learning. Some pupils in Year 6, for example, say that they now see the importance of working hard for the end-of-year tests because they can see the potential benefits, such as helping them gain places in secondary schools of their choice. Not all teaching is yet of this quality and overall it is not consistent enough to ensure adequate progress in all lessons. In Year 5 in particular pupils do not learn as well as in other classes. Too much time is spent on managing pupils' behaviour, tasks are not explained well enough and there are weaknesses in the organisation of time and resources. There have been changes to staffing in the Foundation Stage which have reduced the effectiveness and consistency of teaching and learning.

A common weakness across lessons is the extent to which work provides the right amount of challenge for all groups of pupils. This was the case at the October

inspection. Although work is sometimes modified to meet different needs this is not happening consistently enough to enable pupils to make adequate progress. Lessons consolidate some pupils' learning but do not extend it further. Pupils are often given identical tasks irrespective of ability and, while teacher and teaching assistant support helps some groups understand the work, others do not receive the input they need to guide or extend their learning. Many pupils try their best in these circumstances, but there are occasions where the inappropriate challenge causes inattentiveness, which can escalate into behavioural problems.

Marking was also a weakness at the last inspection and it remains so, although there are signs of improvement. More detailed feedback is now being given to pupils than previously. The best marking is extremely thorough, giving precise and helpful information to pupils on the strengths of their work and what they need to do to improve it. However, this is not the norm and too much marking is still too superficial to help pupils know what to do to improve their work.

Despite the improvements evident since the last inspection, the main weaknesses identified then of inconsistency and inappropriate levels of challenge remain.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching quality to provide all pupils with the right levels of support and challenge so that they can learn to the best of their ability – inadequate.

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection leadership responsibilities have been delegated more fully to extend the senior leadership team. The middle managers are embracing their increased responsibility well in monitoring teaching and learning and they realise there is more to do. They are receiving good support from a range of outside expertise in order to develop their leadership skills. Leadership and management are appropriately focused on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together and are creating a climate in which staff are working more as a team to bring about improvements. There is an increasing awareness among staff that they too are accountable for raising standards and achievement. Staff are receiving training in evaluating pupils' performance so that pupils can be challenged at the right level to make better progress. The school and representatives from Education Leeds have worked closely together to produce detailed plans to guide the key priorities for improvement. The action plans focus on the main areas for improvement, with clear timescales and monitoring arrangements, but it is not clear what is expected from the actions taken in terms of quantifiable outcomes for pupils.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has identified the weakest teaching. However, monitoring is too descriptive and systems are not robust enough to ensure consistency and fully identify the weaker areas at whole-school level, such as the need to match tasks more closely to pupils' abilities. Furthermore, information gained from observations is not always shared among key staff to best

effect to raise standards. Some less formal observations, such as 'learning walks' are leading to a greater consistency in the use of the 'working wall displays' and pupils' use of success criteria to improve their work.

The governing body has now a full complement but a number of members are new to the role. Governors are supportive and attend review meetings regularly but much is left to a small core. Education Leeds has not yet appointed additional governors to the school. Without external support the governors have not managed to develop their role in monitoring the school's performance and holding it to account.

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

- Widen management so that more staff take greater leadership and management responsibilities and allow senior management time to be used more effectively – satisfactory.

External support

The statement of action provided by Education Leeds fulfils requirements. It has been agreed with the school and Education Leeds that the timescale of December 2007 for the school to emerge from special measures is too ambitious. This date has been revised to July 2008. There is extensive, on-going support provided by several specialist officers coordinated by the school improvement adviser. However, the officers have not yet undertaken a formal review of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Support to strengthen the role of the governing body in monitoring the work of the school has not been provided.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the monitoring of teaching so that it is sharply focused on improving pupils' learning and raising achievement and standards.
- With the support of Education Leeds, strengthen the role of governors particularly in monitoring the work of the school so that improvements made are secure.

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

Yours sincerely
Brenda McIntosh
Additional Inspector