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Miss Linda McLanachan
Headteacher
Intack Primary School
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Dear Miss McLanachan

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Intack Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit with Tony Pearson Additional Inspector to your school on 11-12 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 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, inspectors observed lessons, an assembly and one registration session. Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle 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 visit, the deputy headteacher has been appointed to the headship of a neighbouring school and will leave at the end of the summer term 2007. An experienced deputy headteacher has been seconded to the school as an interim measure until a permanent appointment is secured. A further member of the teaching staff will retire at the end of term. Suitable arrangements are in place for

her replacement. The school has also appointed an additional member of staff to work with pupils who have English as an additional language.

Achievement and standards

Preliminary results from the 2007 national tests have been received by the school. At Key Stage 1 there has been an overall fall in standards attained by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to 2006 although more pupils attained the higher level in writing. At Key Stage 2 more pupils reached expected levels in each core subject. Results in English, mathematics and science increased by 5, 9 and 12 percentage points respectively. Attainment at the higher level remained similar to the previous year's results. Overall however, standards at both Key Stages remain well below previous national averages, except in science. The school has significantly improved the way it monitors pupils' performance and consequently has a much clearer understanding of where improvement is required. Evidence suggests that the majority of pupils are now making better progress than previously although this is not yet reflected in overall standards, particularly at Key Stage 1. However, the legacy of underachievement is being tackled more effectively.

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

The emerging strengths identified in pupils' personal development and well-being at the previous monitoring visit are becoming increasingly evident across the school. The large majority of pupils respond well to the school's efforts to motivate them and engage them in their learning. Pupils appreciate the recognition given to their academic and personal achievement; palpable excitement was evident when awards are presented. Behaviour in the majority of lessons is much improved because learning is better matched to pupils' learning needs and interests. Overall, pupils exert greater effort in tackling their work and show perseverance in completing tasks.

The school has continued to tackle attendance matters with firmness and determination. These efforts have been successful for the majority although the poor attendance of pupils from a small core of families remains a substantial issue to address and continues to adversely affect unauthorised absence rates. Nonetheless, the school and LA have been diligent in taking appropriate action against these families although these efforts have not had a direct impact on their overall attendance. The reduction in the number of pupils arriving late for school has continued. Pupils themselves recognise this improving trend and note that there are consequently fewer interruptions to the start of lessons.

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

- Continue to raise levels of attendance – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve. Most teaching is good although a significant proportion remains satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning have become more robust as observations conducted by senior managers have become routine and directly focused on how well pupils are learning. Accompanying feedback is helping the majority of teachers to provide for pupils' needs much more effectively. This is being further helped by better use of assessment information. Most teachers demonstrate an improved understanding of pupils' progress and this is strengthening their ability to tackle areas of weakness, particularly in the core subjects. Consequently, the large majority of pupils gain more enjoyment from their work and demonstrate greater commitment to their studies.

Most teachers display improved confidence in managing learning and are beginning to provide opportunities for pupils to work independently. In a Year 5 literacy lesson, for example, pupils were able to work largely unsupervised to create realistic role-play scenarios which were then confidently acted out for the class.

Systems for marking pupils' work have also improved but are applied inconsistently. At best feedback offers pupils an accurate assessment of their work in relation to their targets and provides appropriate guidance about how they can improve further. Occasionally however, marking still concentrates only on the quality of effort or the standard of presentation, leaving pupils confused about how well they have done or how to make progress.

Increasingly, support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities now takes place in classrooms, ensuring that these pupils have more opportunities to consolidate their knowledge and understanding through involvement in activities with other groups of pupils. This work is enhanced by the effective support these pupils receive from teaching assistants. Provision for those pupils whose first language is not English continues to be good.

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 – satisfactory progress

- Urgently ensure all staff are trained in child-protection procedures– No longer an issue.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leadership team have continued to work diligently in tackling the school's remaining weaknesses. Their ability to undertake this work has been enhanced because monitoring and evaluation procedures have been further strengthened. Monitoring records demonstrate that senior leaders have a secure grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, the relevance of the curriculum to pupils' learning needs and the achievement and standards being attained by pupils. Development planning is well targeted and actions taken are leading to sustained progress. These improvements are helping to strengthen staff morale as the rewards for their collective hard work are becoming apparent. Most teachers and support staff are more confident about their work and have a better understanding of what is expected of them.

Significant efforts have been made to develop the capacity of middle leaders to undertake their work. This has included extending their responsibilities to lead improvements more directly. They now systematically carry out observations of teaching and learning and routinely scrutinise performance information. This has greatly increased their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their own particular subjects, enabling them to provide valuable feedback to teachers about how to improve.

Governors continue to deepen their knowledge of the school's performance through regular and timely reports. They remain forthright in their desire to see the school improve further and while they take pride in recent achievements recognise that much further improvement is still required.

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 – good progress

External support

The LA's support continues to be effective and increasingly proportionate to the needs of the school. Overall, time given by LA officers to help the school has reduced as the school's capacity to manage its own improvement has strengthened. On-going work through the intensifying support programme, staff expertise to support pupils who have English as an additional language, and budgetary assistance have been rightly maintained and are effective.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the agreement of the monitoring HMI.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Blackburn and Darwen.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson HMI
H M Inspector