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Mr G Leach
Horton Grange Primary School
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Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 2EU

Dear Mr Leach

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HORTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Angela Headon HMI, Henry Moreton Additional Inspector and Ron Bulman Additional Inspector to your school on 22 and 23 May, 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 November 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, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher. They also met with members of the senior leadership team, the chair of governors, representatives from Education Bradford and groups of pupils from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Informal discussions were also held with other members of staff and pupils.

Context

At the time of the school's inspection, significant staff instability was noted as a number of teachers were absent from school. The number of staff absences has now decreased and classes that were previously covered by supply teachers are now

taught by members of the senior leadership team. The school is to be affected, however, by further staff changes as the two deputy headteachers and an assistant headteacher are to leave school by the end of the summer term. At this point in time their replacements have not been secured. The numbers of pupils on role have declined from 675 to 660. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language or who are new to English, remains above average. A significant proportion of pupils who are new to English only stay in school for a short time.

Achievement and standards

At the time of the inspection, achievement and standards were judged to be inadequate. Since then the school has looked carefully at their pupils' progress to identify where additional support is required to aid their achievement. Similarly, work to improve the quality of teaching and learning has begun. In lessons, more pupils are beginning to make satisfactory progress; however, this picture of improvement is not consistent throughout school. Another issue for school is that pupils who are new to English or have English as an additional language are disadvantaged because provision to meet their needs is inadequate. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they should. Recent work carried out by the school has not yet made sufficient impact on achievement so that standards rise at the pace needed.

Judgement

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

- Raise the achievement of all pupils in English, mathematics and science – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good. In discussion, pupils voiced concern about what they see as boisterous behaviour especially at playtime and lunchtime. However, they said that any such incidents are dealt with well by staff. Rewards for good behaviour now form an integral part of the school's reward system. Pupils are very polite to visitors, reflecting pride in their school. Attendance, which is satisfactory, is improving. There have been no exclusions this academic year, which is another improvement. Parents are more involved in their children's learning. Pupils value the things that school is doing for them but feel that they have the potential to be more involved, particularly through a School Council.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are beginning to improve. More good teaching is evident in school; however, inadequate teaching remains. This continues to have a significant impact on pupils' progress, particularly in some year groups. In most classes, a strength of lessons is what pupils themselves contribute; pupils respond well to staff and they are attentive learners. However, in some lessons, teachers worry too much about the possibility of pupils misbehaving and in others, teachers do not always ensure that pupils are listening to them when they speak.

Good lessons are characterised by the provision of activities that make learning fun. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils are challenged to do their best by the tasks that are planned for them. In a Year 4 class, where literacy and numeracy were observed, the teacher had high expectations of the class to succeed and the teacher's clear enthusiasm and enjoyment were reciprocated by the pupils. However, in many classes, the challenge planned for pupils of different abilities relate to whether or not the task can be done with or without support. In such cases, there is not enough attention given to the use of assessment information so that activities are planned to meet pupils' needs in a purposeful way. This is a particular concern when considering the teaching and learning of pupils who have English as an additional language or who may be new to English. Although an adequate number of teaching assistants are deployed in classes to support these pupils, they require training and a firmer framework in which to work. In some instances they help pupils during presentations or group work when pupils' understanding is incomplete. In other instances their potential is underused, when they make little contact with the pupils whilst the teacher is talking.

There is some small group tuition for these pupils with an emphasis on pupils speaking Arabic, however, minimal support is available for those pupils from Eastern Europe. The more able pupils acquire English well in these sessions but others find the improvised nature of them confusing. The school has insufficient specialist staffing to deal adequately with the number and diversity of the languages in the school; too much responsibility for their learning is in fact deployed to class teachers. As a result, provision for pupils speaking English as an additional language and for those who are new to English is inadequate. The school's documentation makes reference to its compensation for this potential barrier to learning, but much remains theoretical and has not been delivered. These pupils are identified but their progress is often intermittent due to absence or the short period of time that many spend in school; at present their progress is not evaluated carefully enough.

Systems to track pupils' progress are now in place. Most teachers are more confident to assess their progress and so underachievement is identified at a much earlier stage than it was. Teachers use classroom displays well with 'shooting stars' to signal the areas that require improvement and pupils have a better understanding of how well they are doing in English and mathematics. There is more effective moderation of pupils' work in comparison with national standards and there is better understanding of how pupils are performing towards individual targets. Through regular 'pupil reviews', Year leaders have a clearer role in monitoring pupils' progress. However, they have yet to evaluate effectively whether or not the progress pupils make is good enough, but the procedures are now in place to help them do so.

Judgement

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

- Improve teaching and learning to a good standard to help pupils to quickly catch up on lost ground – inadequate progress.

- Ensure that pupils have a clear knowledge and understanding of their learning targets, and that the school tracks their progress towards reaching them robustly – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and staff are working well with Education Bradford (EB) to bring about improvement. There has been some success in terms of tracking pupils' progress and in monitoring teaching and learning. The headteacher supported by a consultant has taken full responsibility for lesson observations and has an accurate view of teaching and learning. The school is clear that even though improvements have been made, they have not yet impacted positively on achievement and standards.

The headteacher is delegating more responsibility to other members of staff, however, there is some way to go in this aspect of the school's work. Senior leaders have worked hard to co-ordinate developments in teaching and learning, particularly focusing on planning and assessment. Year group leaders are taking greater responsibility and beginning to develop their skills in writing action plans that have a better focus on achievement. The role of subject leaders, however, is underdeveloped and is not strong enough to secure the required improvements in achievement and standards. This is compounded by the fact that a number of senior staff will leave at the end of the year and some of these have significant subject responsibilities. At present, there is no clear strategic overview as to how this is to be addressed, particularly in relation to the leadership and management of English and mathematics.

The headteacher has secured significant improvements in the levels of staff attendance and there is now greater stability amongst the staff within school. Instability remains an issue to be resolved, however, with the imminent departure of the two deputy headteachers and an assistant headteacher.

The work of the governing body is developing satisfactorily. Governors have a clear determination to hold the school to account. The Chair of Governors meets regularly with the headteacher; suitable committee structures have been established and relevant governor training has taken place. The information provided by the headteacher and the School Improvement Officer has allowed governors to start to challenge the school better and to ask the critical questions required to address the key issues identified for improvement.

Judgement

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

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, so that the school provides an acceptable standard of education – inadequate progress.
- Work to ensure that the quality of pupils' education is not disrupted – inadequate progress.

External support

Education Bradford's statement of action is comprehensive. It identifies clearly where support and challenge are to be provided. However, the time identified by EB for Horton Grange to be removed from special measures is unrealistic. In addition, insufficient attention has been given to the achievement of pupils with English as an additional language or for those who are new to English. The plan needs to be revised, therefore, to reflect these matters. In spite of these required amendments, support provided for teachers, the headteacher and governors has been extensive and well focussed. In particular the school improvement officer has challenged effectively and has a good overview of the progress made by the school. The school has gained from guidance provided by the local authority's Human Resources team. In addition, the headteacher has benefited from consultant headteacher support.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Quality of Education Bradford's statement of action – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the use of assessment information in planning lessons to meet pupils' needs.
- Ensure that provision for pupils who have English as an additional language or who are new to English is effective.
- Provide for the effective leadership and management of English, mathematics and science.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Strategic Director - Services to Children and Young People and the Managing Director of Education Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley
H M Inspector