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Mrs H Pickin
The Headteacher
Waterside Primary School
Eastwood Road
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Dear Mrs Pickin

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Waterside Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 June 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

The inspector observed the school's work, including a performance of the school opera, evaluated pupils' work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, two representatives from the local authority (LA), and the chair of governors and members of the curriculum committee.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school since the second monitoring visit.

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory progress has been made in raising standards and achievement, as shown in lesson observations, the scrutiny of work and evaluation of school tracking data. However, it is unlikely that the current Year 6 pupils will have met their targets

when the results of this year's Key Stage 2 national tests are published. The Year 5 pupils have reached better levels than previously in their end of year assessments and there is firm evidence to show that Year 4 pupils are making accelerated progress. Good improvement to the progress of Year 2 pupils is evident, due in no small part to the effective teaching for the class. The same is true of children in the Foundation Stage. Satisfactory improvement to progress is apparent in Year 3 because provision for this age group is now more secure. The progress of Year 1 pupils has improved adequately despite the fact they have been taught by four different teachers this school year.

It is probable that continued improvement to standards and achievement will arise from further development of the existing assessment and target tracking systems. Pupils attaining Level 3B and 4B in Year 5 are the critical groups for focus in order to ensure the year group meets its full potential. Conversion of these existing levels to Levels 4 and 5 at the end of Year 6 is essential in order to meet the challenging targets now being set by the school. The current Year 1 and Year 3 pupils will require a close watch next year to ensure their achievement gathers sufficient momentum to meet the targets set for them.

The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has improved satisfactorily because teaching assistants now have a much more focused role in supporting their work. Pupils who speak English as an additional language have also increased their progress satisfactorily. School data still shows that higher attainers are not always reaching optimum standards, largely due to inconsistent expectation and challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being were not a specific focus of the current visit. However, attendance records were scrutinised carefully for signs of improvement. Discussion with staff about attendance and punctuality was helpful in showing that there is now a much firmer tracking of absence and a more thorough first day telephone calling system. Attendance rates are a little higher now than they were a year ago. Lesson observation and discussion with pupils produced ample evidence to show that behaviour has improved well, especially in Year 6. The pupils were well behaved, polite and sensible in all the classes visited.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve satisfactorily. There is now much more stability in staffing and the situation is likely to be even more positive in September with the appointment of two permanent teachers to work in Years 1 and 2. Evidence from lesson observation and the work scrutiny shows that there are strengths of provision, especially teaching, in the existing Years 2 and 6 and in the Foundation Stage. The weakest teaching is in Year 1 although it was observed to be adequate during the current visit. It is evident that the headteacher and senior leaders have

been determined to improve teaching further this term and they have succeeded due to smarter monitoring and carefully targeted training and support for teachers and teaching assistants.

The current pattern of teaching quality suggests that pupils in the current Years 1 and 3 will require consistently good provision next year to make sure they make up enough ground to match the achievement of pupils in other year groups. The fact that next year the Year 6 teacher is remaining with that year group appears to be a positive indicator for the overall quality of teaching. The current Year 6 pupils have benefited well from the increased challenge provided since January 2007. However, challenge is less consistent in other year groups, especially for higher attainers. Despite this, the match of work to pupils' needs is better than it was earlier this school year.

The curriculum continues to develop soundly. There is improved provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Provision for those who speak English as an additional language has been consolidated effectively this term. The school opera and the display of pupils' artwork in the hall demonstrate clearly the effective development of creativity that is emerging in school.

Care, guidance and support are also improving satisfactorily. Pastoral care continues to be a strength, and academic guidance is becoming more rigorous because it is based on a more effective assessment and target tracking system. However, the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that marking is more effective in English than it is in mathematics in showing pupils what they need to do next to improve.

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

- improve the accuracy and use of assessment information to ensure all pupils are suitably challenged and shown how to improve – satisfactory
- develop efficient tracking and target setting procedures in order to rectify shortcomings in pupils' achievement more quickly – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The greatest improvements this term have been in aspects of leadership and management. There is now much firmer educational direction, especially from the headteacher. Senior leaders and the headteacher are now much smarter in their work and are developing a reliable understanding of the school's performance and pupils' needs. School development planning has been consolidated effectively and target deadlines are met much more consistently than at the beginning of this school year.

Systems of monitoring and evaluation are more rigorous than before, although continued development is required to ensure enough emphasis is given to monitoring the challenge provided for higher attainers. In addition, monitoring reports are too descriptive at times and require firmer evaluation of the progress of pupils.

The work of governors has improved really well this term. The training provided on the interpretation of RaiseOnline data has been of great benefit for them in developing their critical friend role. Governors are clearly now much less reliant on the interpretation of data provided by school leaders or the LA. It was very apparent during discussion with members of the curriculum committee that governors are now providing the necessary challenge to school leaders.

Because the headteacher, senior leaders and the governors have a more realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, their capacity to make improvements has risen well.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- strengthen leadership and management at all levels by having a more rigorous approach to the evaluation of teaching and its effectiveness in raising pupils' achievement – good.

External support

The quality and impact of the external support provided for the school by the LA have improved well over the last term and are good. School leaders and the governors are now much more self-reliant than previously and whilst LA personnel continue to provide support, the amount has lessened considerably. The training provided for governors has been particularly successful.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the existing Year 5 pupils who are already at levels 3B and 4B progress well and meet their targets.
- Ensure the provision next year for the current Year 1 and 3 pupils is effective in accelerating their progress.
- Ensure that higher attainers are consistently challenged in all year groups.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, and the Director of Education for Stoke-on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington
Additional Inspector