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12 October 2007

Mrs C Robinson
Headteacher
Austhorpe Primary School
Austhorpe Lane
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS15 8TP

Dear Mrs Robinson

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF AUSTHORPE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Liz Godman, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 October 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF AUSTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 10–11 October 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from Education Leeds.

Context

Since the last visit the consultant headteacher left the school and a new permanent headteacher took up post in September 2007. A part-time Reception teacher on a short-term contract has been appointed to cover a vacancy.

Achievement and standards

The 2007 national assessments in Years 2 and 6 indicate that the school has halted the trend of declining standards. However, weaknesses remained in the numbers of Year 2 pupils reaching the higher Level 3, showing that some pupils still underachieved. Year 6 results showed some small improvements from the previous year. Pupils' current achievement is stronger as a result of improving teaching. Progress in lessons has improved overall, although there are variations that relate to the quality of teaching and the pace of learning. Current assessment and tracking data indicate that more pupils are now achieving at a rate above that expected nationally. This is making inroads into past underachievement and beginning to raise standards.

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

- improve standards and pupils' achievement from the Foundation Stage to Year 5 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Strengths noted at the inspection in 2006 have been maintained. Pupils consistently behave well and are enthusiastic about school. They are eager to learn in lessons. Attitudes are most positive where teachers allow pupils to plan investigations, talk about their work and assess how well they have done. Pupils support one another and work together well. The school council and pupil monitors make a positive contribution to school life and offer constructive ideas for improvement.

Quality of provision

Teachers consistently use agreed strategies to improve the quality of teaching, so that elements of good teaching are now more secure across the school. The common lesson planning format is used effectively in most classes to ensure that adults and pupils are clear about the purpose and activities of the lesson. In most lessons work

is adapted to meet the range of needs of pupils in the class. Sometimes, however, the tasks provided are too limited to enable some pupils to achieve at higher levels. Teaching assistants ensure that individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and small groups take a full part in, and learn from, the activities. All teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas with one another.

More effective lessons, primarily in Key Stage 2, give pupils greater opportunities to plan their own investigations. Pupils enjoy these challenges and show mature and sensible responses to the higher expectations placed on them. In some other lessons in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, pupils are inactive, when they are eager to get on and to demonstrate what they can do, because teachers talk for too long. As a result some sessions are laboured, pupils become disinterested, the lesson loses its pace and pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Adults in the Reception classroom work hard to talk to children who are involved in activities they have chosen for themselves. However, they sometimes miss opportunities to extend children's learning, because they are busy trying to keep everyone involved.

The school is starting to use assessments to identify pupils who are not making the expected progress. This information is also being used to identify gaps in curriculum coverage and therefore in pupils' understanding, so that additional learning opportunities can be established. This is starting to improve the progress that pupils are making in their learning. The accuracy of assessments has improved so that teachers and pupils are clearer about what is expected. Teachers have set challenging targets for each pupil's continued achievement with stronger strategies to identify and give timely support to any not making the target rates of progress. Pupils' involvement in the assessment of their own and others' learning has also improved and is now a common feature of many lessons. Pupils are very clear about what they should be achieving in lessons, but are less clear about what they have to do to gain higher levels.

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

- increase the quantity of good teaching – satisfactory
- develop consistent approaches to curricular planning and tracking pupils' progress so that provision meets the needs of all groups of pupils – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher has successfully and effectively taken up her position and quickly gained the support of staff, governors and pupils. She is giving a clear steer to the school's work based on her initial accurate review and perceptive analysis of progress made on the action planning. This is driving her work with staff to revise the improvement plans, ensuring that the focus is on the most important matters for the school. Improving pupils' learning remains at the core of the school's priorities and the contributions of different levels of management are clearly stated. Longer term strategies for continued improvement are being established alongside immediate measures to improve pupils' achievement throughout the school. In

particular, the headteacher has strengthened improvement plans by introducing stronger systems to track pupils' achievement and new performance management processes. These are closely linked to regular review of pupils' targets and progress to ensure that there is clear and up-to-date information to identify further necessary action.

The improving teamwork identified in the last visit has been successfully maintained and extended. Senior leaders have greater confidence and convey an increasingly clear, shared understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are taking wider responsibilities and making an increasing contribution to improvements in teaching and learning through a range of monitoring measures, including direct observation of teaching. Monitoring information is used to ensure greater consistency and identify further improvements to the curriculum and teaching. Purposeful staff training, closely linked to the school's main priorities, supports this. However, monitoring does not always focus closely enough on evaluating how well teaching strategies are directly impacting on pupils' progress. The governing body has made a thorough review of its approaches to monitoring the school. New systems are giving governors more first-hand information and wider involvement in the school's work. This understanding gives a clearer view and equips governors to ask the right questions to fulfil their responsibilities with increasing rigour and effectiveness.

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

- improve the leadership and management of the school to ensure that timely action is taken to secure improvements in the school's work and standards – satisfactory
- establish a shared approach to monitoring the work of the school – satisfactory.

External support

Education Leeds continues to provide useful support, well matched to the school's needs, which is having a positive impact. In particular, training in using assessment to promote pupils' learning is leading to a greater understanding of how achievement can be improved and new approaches to teaching. Training is also supporting the improving leadership roles of senior staff. The joint review group, involving governors, staff and representatives of Education Leeds is proving to be a useful forum for sharing information and evaluating the impact of the school's work.

Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities identified in the December 2006 report remain the most important for the school.