

17 July 2008

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 Katharine Halifax, Additional Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 –good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Executive Director of Education Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Liz Godman
Additional inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF AUSTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 15 and 16 July 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons, assemblies and lunchtime activities, examined documents and met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and two representatives from Education Leeds.

Context

A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and is expected to join the school in September 2008.

Achievement and standards

The improvements to the progress of pupils in the Reception class noted at the last monitoring inspection in March 2008 have been maintained. An analysis of children's achievement at the end of the current Reception year indicates consistent gains in personal, social and emotional development, in communication and thinking, in the use of numbers for labels and counting, and in children's physical development. This accelerated progress is as a result of better teaching and provision in these areas. There have been fewer gains in linking sounds and letters, writing and calculation. However, improved progress overall means that a majority of children in the current Reception class are now working securely at the levels expected for their age and a significant number are working beyond this.

Greater challenge for higher attaining pupils in Year 2 has resulted in a marked increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in the end of Key Stage 1 assessments. The school's own sharper assessment indicates that the greatest progress has been made in this year group in reading and mathematics and that writing remains an area for further improvement.

The progress of pupils in Year 6 has continued to accelerate. School data indicate that all appear to have met and some have exceeded the challenging targets set for them in English, mathematics and science. The progress of younger pupils in Key Stage 2 continues to be variable and is generally slower overall as a result of some persisting inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In these years, pupils have made gains in reading and in mathematics which are marginally greater than expected, but progress in writing remains slower.

Accurate identification and more closely targeted support for those pupils in need of additional help in Years 1, 3 and 4 in reading and writing has proved effective in consistently boosting the achievements of these pupils.

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

- Improve standards and pupils' achievements from the Foundation Stage to Year 5 – good

Personal development and well-being

As at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, pupils continue to be well behaved and enthusiastic about school, commenting, 'school is changing for the better.' Pupils' understanding of keeping safe, healthy and of citizenship is now promoted very effectively. As a result, pupils and adults are thrilled to have achieved the Healthy Schools status and are proud of their increasing contribution to the school and the locality. Through a much greater use of the community, pupils have, for example, contributed to the district travel plan, identifying where they would like pedestrian crossings and considered how to improve areas that are polluted and unhygienic. As the school is widening pupils' experiences, their awareness of the needs of others is growing. For example, after working with a refugee they produced some powerful and poignant poetry.

Quality of provision

The pattern of the quality of teaching observed is similar to that seen at the last monitoring inspection. There is still too much inconsistency that is affecting pupils' achievements. Nevertheless, teachers have embraced the changes in the curriculum and are now willing to 'take risks' to provide pupils with more enjoyable and varied learning experiences. However, in their endeavours, some of the basic principles of teaching are occasionally overlooked, such as ensuring that all pupils are facing the whiteboard, or providing activities for pupils who learn in different ways. Teachers continue to plan their lessons conscientiously, but the quality is still variable. All are clear about the learning intention of the lesson but, occasionally, the planning for group work still focuses on the activities to be covered rather than the knowledge and skills pupils of differing abilities will acquire. Similarly, the way support assistants are used is still patchy in some lessons. In the better lessons, support for individuals and groups accelerates learning, whereas in others, assistants are passive for some of the lesson rather than ensuring that the pupils they are supporting are engaged and understand what is required. This reduces the rate of progress of these pupils.

Lessons are now conducted with a greater sense of urgency and the setting of time targets helps pupils to complete a greater volume of work. Teachers are more accurate in the way they assess and record pupils' achievements but the use they make of this information varies from class to class. Where it is used more effectively, work is planned to challenge pupils and make them think more deeply. In other lessons, the same activity is provided for all pupils so those who learn more quickly become bored, while those who learn more slowly sometimes become frustrated. All teachers are now using strategies to help pupils assess what they have done well, with pupils in some classes confidently setting their own steps to success.

Good advancement has been made in making the curriculum wider, more exciting and more meaningful. Pupils say how much they have enjoyed the 'theme days' and 'mini-weeks'. Particular favourites have been the 'scrap heap challenge', and the

camping day, which have increased pupils' opportunities to learn skills for life such as problem solving and team building. The current theme, 'around the world in three days', is not only extending pupils' awareness of other countries, but is also fostering a growing appreciation of other cultures. Enriching the curriculum has not been at the expense of improving provision in English and mathematics. More accurately targeted support for pupils who need extra help in these subjects has paid dividends and is raising achievement. However, leaders recognise the need to look at the times of literacy and numeracy lessons in some classes, for example, so that they are not concentrated too often in an afternoon when pupils are becoming tired. Through looking beyond the school, pupils' horizons have been widened, and the link with a local business is helping the school to improve the provision for reading.

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 pupils – good

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management has continued to improve since the last monitoring inspection. The headteacher's calm and determined approach has been instrumental in enhancing pupils' experience of school through a more relevant and exciting curriculum. This is raising pupils' achievement and is widening their understanding of cultures beyond the school and in the wider world. This new approach has united the staff team in their drive for improvement and has reinvigorated their teaching. However, this work is in its infancy and there remains much to be done before these changes have a consistently positive effect on pupils' enjoyment and skills.

The headteacher continues to make good use of her careful analysis of progress against the school's plans for improvement to identify where further action is needed to increase the quantity of good teaching and so raise standards. She recognises that there is more to do in this regard. Her accurate and comprehensive evaluation of the school's effectiveness is also helping to secure and sustain developments beyond these immediate areas for improvement.

Members of the senior leadership team monitor the work of the school with great energy and increasing rigour. Their sharper analysis of the quality of teaching and learning means that they know exactly which areas are less strong and in need of improvement. This greater accuracy and consistency of assessment of pupils' progress means they are now better placed to use this information to tackle the remaining inconsistencies in teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement. Subject leaders are gaining in confidence as their contribution grows in the development of their subjects as part of the school's revision of its curriculum.

Governors are maintaining their challenge to the school and their understanding of its progress in relation to the areas for improvement continues to grow. They are starting to consider the school's future and to think about what they will need to do to secure and sustain improvement in the longer term.

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 – good
- establish a shared approach to monitoring the work of the school – good

External support

Education Leeds continues to provide well measured support to the school. This has been effective in assisting with the revision of the curriculum and in enabling staff to start to gain a clearer and shared understanding of the quality of teaching they need to develop to meet the needs of all pupils in the school. Education Leeds recognises that its continued support will be necessary to ensure that this understanding brings about the required changes to teaching and learning in the classroom.

Priorities for further improvement

- The areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006 remain the most important for the school.