

3 July 2008

Mrs Pauline Pendlebury
Headteacher
Horton Grange Primary School
Spencer Road
Great Horton
Bradford
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Dear Mrs Pendlebury

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HORTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Lesley Clark and Judith Tolley, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 1 and 2 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 November 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, the Strategic Director – Services to Children and Young People, and the Managing Director of Education Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Angela M Headon
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HORTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 1 and 2 July 2008

Evidence

During the visit, inspectors analysed a range of documents and examined samples of pupils' work. Twenty three lessons were observed. Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, support staff, the chair of governors, Education Bradford and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, a new headteacher has been appointed and will take up his post in September 2008. An assistant headteacher joined the senior leadership team after Easter and a new teacher, presently working in Year 4, is now in post. Three teachers have been appointed, to teach in Key Stage 2 from September 2008. The present headteacher will act as a consultant headteacher until December 2008.

Achievement and standards

The school's assessment information indicates that the progress presently made by pupils continues to improve rapidly.

In 2007, standards in Key Stage 1 were exceptionally low, with results in reading, writing and mathematics significantly below average. Recent results, however, show a significantly improved picture overall. Attainment at expected levels in reading is above the national average and there is an improving trend in performance for both writing and mathematics. The school recognises, however, that writing remains a key area for development and has acted swiftly to further improve attainment in Year 2.

At Key Stage 2, assessment information shows that pupils are continuing to make better progress in English and mathematics in all year groups, with the exception of Year 4 classes. This is due in part to the number of pupils who have entered this year group at different points in their school career. However, effective strategies to improve attainment in this year group are already in place with some signs of success. Good progress is clearly evident in English in Year 5 and in mathematics in Year 6 and progress in Year 3 has significantly improved since the previous monitoring visit. The school continues to develop assessment information in science to enable performance across the school to be monitored with greater rigour.

Children throughout the Foundation Stage are making good progress. From well below average starting points, the majority are working securely within expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. The consistency of provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is having a major impact on children's achievement.

Pupils new to English, with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are well supported. The effective use of the language support team, particularly for Eastern European pupils and the sharper use of individual education plans for those pupils with LDD ensure that they continue to progress well.

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

- Raise the achievement of all pupils in English, mathematics and science - good

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave very well in school and work hard. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons, are keen to do well and are proud of their achievements. Their growing sense of confidence and self-esteem is seen in the increasing influence of the school council which fully represents their views. From new playground markings to fund-raising for charities, school councillors are beginning to play a noticeable and influential part in school life. For instance, the questions they prepared as part of the interview for the new headteacher showed they had thought seriously about what was needed to help their school continue to improve.

Pupils are appreciative of the improvements to their learning environment. They especially find the 'working walls' useful to consult when they need help. This is supporting them in becoming independent learners. Extra-curricular clubs and educational visits are substantially broadening pupils' educational experience and enhancing their enjoyment of learning. The school's attendance monitoring and the use of rewards, including 'class cups', have ensured that attendance also continues to improve.

Quality of provision

The school has worked swiftly to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. Teachers have responded well and there is clear evidence that the school is well on its way to ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good. During the monitoring visit, approximately two thirds of the lessons observed were good or better. The headteacher and school leaders have been successful in achieving a good level of consistency between classes and age groups, effectively ensuring pupils' ability to maintain their progress between key stages.

Teachers now have a greater confidence and are generally more knowledgeable about pupils' prior attainment. This is evident in the assured way they plan their lessons with differentiated activities clearly indicated. In those lessons where pupils made the best progress, pupils fully understood the 'steps to success', activities were sharply focused on individual needs, and teachers and teaching assistants monitored and supported pupil progress. Targeted questioning was also used effectively to extend learning as well as to check understanding.

In satisfactory lessons, teacher explanation ensured that most pupils reached the required objectives. However, clear opportunities to extend and challenge pupils, allowing them to explore ideas for themselves were not always taken.

Robust systems, which provide information about pupils' levels of attainment and their progress, are firmly in place. Teachers have a better understanding of assessment data and are using this information well in raising expectations. Guidance given to pupils in workbooks continues to improve and pupils agree that it helps them to understand what they are doing well and where they can improve further. Pupils know their learning targets and are able to recount in detail what they need to do to achieve them.

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

Leadership and management

The headteacher's excellent leadership has resulted in rapid improvement across all key issues. She is well supported by all teaching and support staff, who remain fully committed to raising standards in all year groups. There is now a positive 'culture of learning' within the school. Everyone understands their roles and responsibilities and is fully able to play their part.

The strengthened senior leadership team continues to support and challenge middle leaders and teaching staff. Their complementary skills and effective teamwork have helped to secure improvements in teaching and learning and pupils' progress since the previous monitoring visit. Middle leaders, including year group leaders and subject coordinators continue to develop well. They feel supported, empowered, yet fully accountable, recognising their key role in securing and sustaining improvement. Year group leaders, in particular, are robustly monitoring pupils' achievement through a greater understanding of assessment information. To consolidate and further improve their effectiveness, a planned programme of high quality national training for both senior and middle leaders will take place during the next academic year.

The school's commitment to improving the overall quality of teaching and learning, through the monitoring of planning, workbooks and lessons is proving successful. The school has a secure view of teaching quality in all classes. Pupil progress meetings continue to ensure that individual pupils at risk of underachievement are targeted and quickly supported. Intervention is effective, with examples of improved performance across classes and year groups.

Staffing across the school is stable. Both teacher and support staff absence have declined significantly. When required, classes which require cover teachers are taught by teaching staff within the school, ensuring continuity and good quality provision.

Governors are taking an increasingly active role in the life of the school and there is a clear determination to hold the school to account. They have been instrumental in appointing a serving headteacher from a successful school with a clear focus on securing future improvement. The school continues to consolidate its partnership links, working constructively on a range of key areas with a number of local schools.

The school recognises there is still more to do to raise pupils' standards and levels of attainment. However, a well understood agenda is now in place which will allow the school to further accelerate the pace of change. Through its accurate self-evaluation, effective school improvement planning and its good use of performance management and professional development, the school is actively working to build capacity at all levels.

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 - good
- Work to ensure that the quality of pupils' education is not disrupted - good

External support

Education Bradford has sustained its high quality of support, advice and challenge to the school. Rigorous evaluation reports provided by the school improvement partner help the school to keep its progress under review, with well focused recommendations for further action. Very good relationships exist between the school and Education Bradford and good assistance was recently provided in the appointment of a new headteacher. Education Bradford is now reviewing the support it gives to the school, in line with the increasing capacity of the school's leadership at all levels. This action is well judged.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further improve the use of assessment information to ensure all lessons are consistently good or better.
- Strengthen the focus on science performance across the school.