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27 June 2008

Mrs P Allsopp
The Headteacher
Braunstone Frith Infant School
Liberty Road
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Dear Mrs Allsopp

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BRAUNSTONE FRITH INFANT SCHOOL

Following my visit with Philip Martin, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 June 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers (NQT) may be appointed subject to the following conditions. The school must involve the local authority (LA) in the appointment process. The NQT should be mentored in school by a teacher of proven high quality. All NQT entitlements must be met in full. Appropriate internal and external development, support and induction must be provided.

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 Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BRAUNSTONE FRITH INFANT SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 18 and 19 June 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, senior leadership team, the chair of governors and other governing body members including the school improvement group (SIG), the standards inspector and the associate headteacher. Informal discussions were also held with other staff and pupils.

Context

Since the last visit in January 2008, the literacy subject leader has returned following her maternity leave. The teacher for the Year 1 lower ability stream has left the school. Other staff members are now fulfilling this role. The associate headteacher, appointed to support school leaders, has reduced the amount of time she works with the school. The attendance clerk has resigned but a part time appointment has been made to continue this essential work. One teaching assistant is on a therapeutic return to work, whilst another teaching assistant has resigned her post to start work in Australia. Building work is now complete. All classes, apart from the nurture group, are now located in the main building.

Achievement and standards

From well below average starting points, children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. They make good progress as a result of good teaching coupled with an appropriately engaging and stimulating curriculum. By the time they enter Year 1, school's data shows that many children achieve broadly average outcomes, although there is a wide spread of ability. Standards are weaker in reading and writing compared with other areas of learning.

The results of the most recent end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments in 2008, which have yet to be published formally, indicate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly similar to those of the previous year and remain below average overall. Many of the Year 2 pupils made limited progress in Year 1 because of staffing changes and difficulties in recruiting teachers of a sufficiently high quality. However, this was counterbalanced by high expectations and better teaching in Year 2 which resulted in many pupils making accelerated progress. Most targets were met, although none were achieved at the higher levels. The percentage reaching the higher levels was adversely affected because a number of high ability pupils transferred to other schools during the year. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation show that booster classes designed to support the more able were not successful because the person delivering the lessons had not received suitable training. This has now been remedied. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress as a result of appropriately targeted support from teaching assistants. Pupils from

minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who are at an early stage of learning English and children from Traveller backgrounds, also make satisfactory progress.

Overall, teachers are using assessment information appropriately to challenge pupils. They are using the whole school target setting and tracking system suitably to inform planning. However, this is not always translated into practice or reflected in the work seen. Scrutiny of books shows that many more able pupils often undertake work similar to most other pupils. Pupils in different year groups in mixed age classes also often carry out similar work to each other. Consequently, they are not always sufficiently challenged. There are satisfactory opportunities to practise and consolidate learning in writing and mathematics in Year 1, but too few to write at greater length.

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

- make better use of assessment information to challenge the more able and ensure that pupils in Year 1 have suitable opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

The school continues to work hard to improve attendance. It has continued to implement the range of rewards for classes and individuals who reach target levels and to keep parents informed about the value of good attendance. An extra factor has been the implementation of the stick as well as the carrot. The school now issues fixed penalty notices to parents if their child's absence is not good enough. These procedures are having a positive impact and attendance is gradually improving, but still remains much below average.

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

- work more closely with parents and carers to promote good attendance – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The school places due emphasis on ensuring pupils learn literacy and mathematical skills. However, the coverage, in terms of breadth or depth, is not as well defined in other subjects. Sometimes, pupils do not encounter a subject for some period of time. Whilst pupils have some opportunities to consolidate and practise writing skills in other subjects, these are somewhat limited. An overuse of unsuitable worksheets in some classes does not foster development of writing and subject skills.

Teachers collect and analyse a good deal of information about pupils' achievement and the standards reached. Half termly progress meetings are being better used to identify and target underachievement. Teachers have increased their understanding of how well pupils are progressing, but they do not always use the data well enough to set challenging targets. Expectations are not high enough for some pupils in Year 1. This means that a significant proportion is working below expected levels by the

end of the year. Despite working hard, Year 2 teachers are unable to close the gap to enable higher ability pupils to achieve the levels of which they are capable.

Teachers use the information they have about pupils' achievement and standards to plan work for different abilities in English and mathematics. Whilst this differentiation is apparent in planning, it is not as evident in pupils' written work. Consequently, some pupils, particularly the more able, do not make as much progress as they could. Differentiation is less apparent in other subjects and this limits progress. Teachers keep pupils informed about their targets and phrase these in an understandable way. Pupils know their targets so they have something to aim for. Similarly, teachers share and discuss lesson objectives at the start of lessons so pupils know what they are meant to be learning and what the teacher will be looking for. In the better lessons, teachers mention these objectives throughout the lesson. This helps to keep pupils focused and aids learning. Teachers usually mark work in accordance with the school's policy, letting pupils know where they have succeeded and what the next steps might be. However, pupils do not always have the chance to respond to these comments, or to try out the teachers' suggestions. Teaching assistants offer satisfactory support, working with small groups so that pupils in these groups make similar progress to their classmates. There has been a satisfactory degree of improvement in pupils' handwriting and presentation, but there is still some way to go. Letter formation and number orientation are still issues for some pupils. Sometimes there is insufficient focus on these concerns in marking.

The gates leading to the drive and car park are now locked at the start and end of the school day. This has led to a reduction in the number of parents using the car park and drive and reduced the risk of accidents.

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

- ensure that all pupils have clear guidance about what they need to do to improve and get better – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

This is a school on the verge of coming out of special measures, but it needs a little more time to demonstrate its capacity to sustain improvement. Leaders, managers and all staff have worked diligently to implement the wide ranging Raising Attainment Plan (RAP). There have been a number of successes. Through the introduction of improved tracking procedures, senior leaders are starting to carefully analyse pupils' performance and to identify where there is potential underachievement. However, they need to ensure that challenging targets are set for all pupils. Teaching and learning are being monitored regularly and the headteacher has a clear understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses lie. The leadership team recognises that it needs to be more effective in raising the quality of teaching throughout the school in order to accelerate pupils' progress and boost achievement. Those strategies that have been implemented throughout the school are being evaluated and their impact assessed. Where results are less effective, suitable adjustments have been made to the delivery of the teaching and learning programme. A number of actions have been started but now need to become routine and fully embedded into the culture of the school. For example, staff are

implementing assessment for learning strategies but more time is needed to increase confidence and develop this work further.

Leaders and managers are increasingly demonstrating the key skills required to sustain the school's further improvement. The subject leaders for English and mathematics, along with the coordinators for assessment and special needs, are now taking a greater role in driving forward improvement. Their skills in analysing data are progressing well and leaders have a good understanding of the need for accuracy if underachievement is to be addressed and targets are to be challenging enough to raise standards. Governors are supportive and increasingly effective in evaluating the school's work. They are increasing their understanding of what is happening in the school by visiting more. The SIG has increased its challenge to the school's senior leaders by asking testing questions and holding the school to account. The existing RAP has almost run its course. Although the headteacher and deputy headteacher have identified some priorities for future development, a coherent and manageable strategic plan constructed by all partners which maps out the school's direction for the coming year has yet to be formed.

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

- improve the way pupils' progress is tracked to provide a better understanding of how well they are doing and ensure that whole school strategies are implemented fully and evaluated carefully to check for their effectiveness – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. Its advisory staff visit regularly and have helped to improve provision, especially in the quality of teaching and learning. Good support has been provided by the education welfare officer. The associate headteacher has continued to support the school well. However, it is now an appropriate time for school leaders to demonstrate that they have the capacity to stand alone by withdrawing this support completely. The school improvement adviser has provided good training and development for the school's governors, which was highly valued. The School Improvement Partner has good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and what it needs to do to improve.

Priorities for further improvement

- Withdraw the support of the associate headteacher to allow school leaders to demonstrate that they have the capacity to improve without intensive external support.
- Effectively use assessment information to plan and deliver programmes of work that suitably challenge and extend the more able pupils.
- Ensure that the end of year targets for Year 1 pupils are suitably challenging.
- Ensure that the curriculum for subjects other than literacy and mathematics provides increased opportunities for extended writing.