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13 November 2008

Mr Duncan Jacques
Headteacher
Horton Grange Primary School
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Great Horton
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 2EU

Dear Mr Jacques

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Horton Grange Primary School

Following my visit with Fiona Gowers, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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

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 fifth monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teaching staff, representatives from Education Bradford and a group of older pupils. Twenty two lessons and one assembly were observed.

Context

In September 2008, a new headteacher, appointed before the previous monitoring visit, took up his post. A new deputy headteacher, presently seconded for 12 months, also started at the same time, together with two teachers, now teaching in Key Stage 2. The school is aiming to appoint a new special needs coordinator by the end of the autumn term.

Achievement and standards

When children join the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills are well below those expected for their age. Through continuing improvements in the quality of learning activities, particularly in the 'shared area' and outdoor environment, children make good progress. Children are given many opportunities in both Nursery and Reception classes to improve their skills, which are in line with expected levels when they join Year 1.

Throughout the school, pupils are continuing to make accelerated progress in all year groups and this is directly related to the quality of teaching across the school. Good or better teaching was evident in over three quarters of the lessons observed. At Key Stage 1 there has been an overall improvement in standards in 2008, although standards remain exceptionally low at Key Stage 2.

In 2008, provisional national test results attained by Year 6 pupils declined at both expected and higher levels. Despite extensive intervention and evidence of improved progress at the end of Key Stage 2, these results reflected the previous legacy of underachievement of this year group over a number of years. However, teacher assessments and test results show that pupils presently in Year 6 are on course to reach the school's challenging targets in all core subjects, with attainment expected to be closer to the national average in 2009.

Results in Key Stage 1 improved in all core areas in 2008. With the exception of the number of pupils attaining the highest levels in writing, performance in reading, writing and mathematics increased, with a significant improvement in mathematics at both expected and higher levels.

Comprehensive action has been taken to strengthen writing across the school. However, the school's own assessments indicate that it remains a key area for improvement in a number of year groups.

The school continues to provide good support for identified groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those new to English and with English as an additional language. More recently, this has also included an increasing number of pupils who have joined the school at different times in their school career. However, although the individual progress of all these pupils is closely monitored, the school recognises that, as identified groups, there is less information on their overall progress during their time at the school.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

Quality of provision

Since the previous monitoring visit, school leaders have been successful in achieving further improvements in the quality of teaching across the school. Most of the lessons seen by inspectors during the visit were good or better, helping pupils to catch up on previous levels of underachievement.

Pupils' good behaviour makes a significant contribution to their achievement; they work hard, enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. Lessons have a clear focus and learning is built up in stages through 'steps to success' so pupils know what is expected of them. Learning activities are generally well matched to pupils' needs and teachers use skilled questioning and a variety of learning activities to interest pupils and move them on in their learning. In particular, speaking and listening opportunities are used well to support learning, giving pupils the chance to explore ideas together.

However, although assessment information is used well to plan activities, in some lessons, pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to fully extend their learning, particularly the more able pupils.

Senior leaders keep a careful and accurate check on the progress individual pupils are making, with recent improvements in the monitoring of progress in science. Academic guidance to support and challenge learners is embedded throughout the school. Pupils talk confidently about their targets and generally know how to improve their work further. Marking more consistently shows pupils how they can do better, but the quality of marking still remains an area of focus for improvement. Reward systems in school, such as 'writer of the week', provide effective support and motivation for pupils' academic progress and personal development.

The curriculum is continuing to develop well and successfully promotes enjoyment in learning. There is a strong emphasis on basic skills, particularly writing, with improving provision in science, information and communication technology, and physical education. Pupils enjoy and make the most of a range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 recently appointed headteacher has worked hard to ensure that improvements in all key areas have been maintained. Through effective induction and transition arrangements, he already has a good understanding of the school's achievements and the work still to be done to secure improvements in educational standards.

Since the previous monitoring visit, the senior leadership team has been extended and strengthened. Senior leaders are continuing to develop their strategic role, with high quality training in place. Their responsibilities have been reviewed fully to reflect the changing developments within the school and they have a clear understanding of their individual and collective accountability for whole-school improvement. They continue to develop their skills in evaluating the impact of actions taken to secure improvements in pupils' progress and teaching and learning. The introduction of curriculum, assessment and inclusion teams, including both senior and middle leaders, is also giving all leaders the opportunity to accelerate improvement across the school, whilst developing a greater understanding of whole-school issues.

Internal observation records indicate that the proportion of good or better teaching is continuing to increase. This improving picture was confirmed during the monitoring visit. There are also good arrangements for performance management with a firm focus on raising achievement and teaching and learning. The school has set challenging yet realistic targets, which are well understood by staff. The school has acted swiftly to address the priorities for improvement identified at the previous monitoring visit and is continuing to demonstrate an increasing capacity for further improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, so that the school provides an acceptable standard of education – good

External support

Education Bradford has an accurate view of the school's needs and is refocusing its work appropriately, as the school continues to develop leadership capacity at all levels. Well planned transition arrangements for the new headteacher have resulted in an effective start to the academic year and enabled the school to build on previous developments in all key areas. The very effective work of the school improvement officer continues to both support and challenge the school on all identified priorities. A school improvement partner has recently been assigned to the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Monitor the progress of key groups, including higher ability pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Ensure that pupil progress information is used effectively to sufficiently challenge all pupils in lessons, particularly the more able.