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28 November 2008

Mrs Paula Bailey
Headteacher
Blaydon West Primary School
Blaydon Bank
Blaydon-on-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE21 4PY

Dear Mrs Bailey

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blaydon West Primary School

Following my visit to your school with John Paddick AI, on 26-27 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection is good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the school providing support from an appropriate external source.

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 Gateshead LA.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Shepherd
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Blaydon West Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 26-27 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including observations of lessons, an assembly and behaviour around the school and at playtimes. Inspectors scrutinised documents, samples of pupils' work from each class and analysed school data. They held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, co-ordinators, the interim executive board (IEB), the chair and a member of the shadow governing body.

Context

The deputy headteacher has taken up her post since the previous visit. The shadow governing body is now in place.

Achievement and standards

Results of the national tests in 2007 for Year 6 were well below average in English, mathematics and science. Results in 2008 for this year group are substantially better and have closed the gap between the school's performance and the average across the country. Results are considerably better in mathematics than last year, although results in science dropped. Boys' performance was lower than girls. The trend over the past three years has been rising in English and mathematics but has declined in science. The recorded results of the Key Stage 1 national assessments have declined but this is not significant because the school's assessment is now far more accurate.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that progress is now at least satisfactory and in some year groups it is good. The improved assessment systems show clearly that the majority of pupils have made satisfactory progress since the previous visit. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make inconsistent progress in whole-class sessions because there are variations in the quality of additional help they receive to keep up with the rest of the class. In group work they make consistently satisfactory progress because teachers organise these parts of the lesson effectively

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has improved further since the previous visit. Children make good progress in the Nursery and outstanding progress in Reception. This is due to the teaching team's determination to improve provision both inside and outside the building to match this age group's particular needs across all of the areas of learning. The coordinator identified levels reached in creative development as below the expectations for the children's ages and improved provision to ensure the current high quality opportunities for this area of learning. As a result progress has increased and children are achieving well in creative activities.

The school has made good improvement since the previous monitoring visit on the priority of raising standards and increasing achievement through providing a better match of work to different pupils' needs.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' cooperate well with the staff both in the classroom and when they are outside or moving between buildings. They display good levels of self-control and know when to be quiet or move around in an orderly fashion. In class, pupils are generally attentive and fully engaged in their work. Most pupils clearly enjoy coming to school because they are interested in the variety of activities provided in the classroom. There is clear evidence to show that pupils' skills in reading, writing and numerical work are improving. These increasingly equip them for the next stages of education and their life outside school. However, although pupils are keen to answer in class, some still tend to lack confidence in responding to teachers' questions fully and at length.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved. There is a higher proportion of good teaching than the previous visit across the school, continuing the trend of improvement since the last inspection. This is due to the good quality systems, which were introduced to improve assessment and planning, now being well understood and used consistently by staff. The quality of provision in Foundation Stage continues to improve and is good in the Nursery and outstanding in Reception. There is a small proportion of inadequate teaching where the work set does not match pupils' needs in group work and teaching does not support pupils effectively enough in tackling the new learning. Teaching teams are in the very early stages of organising the new daily reading sessions and the quality is inconsistent. In the best sessions the teacher works very effectively with a group and ensures that all the independent learning is based firmly on reading; in other sessions expectations of the pupils are not high enough and the pace too slow. Checks on the impact of the activities are not always made. The reading journals and assessment systems are also new and again there is a variety in the way teachers are using them.

The curriculum for English and mathematics is improving. There is a good balance between teaching basic writing skills and planning time for extended writing. Visits are used well as a purposeful vehicle for writing. Similarly, the school ensures that there is a good balance between the different aspects of the mathematics curriculum. The considerable improvements to the school library and the introduction of daily reading sessions to increase the amount of time spent in developing basic skills is having a positive impact on basic reading skills and pupils' appreciation of books. The school continues to develop information and communication technology although opportunities are missed to use the interactive whiteboards in lessons. The school is developing its provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities but this is not yet resulting in consistent progress of these pupils because teaching teams are in the process of staff training to help them to understand how to support their different individual needs more closely.

The school takes good care of its pupils, particularly by providing them with a very safe and supportive atmosphere for learning. They appreciate the level of support that they receive and really trust the adults who work with them. Safeguarding systems remain effective. Relationships in the classroom and around the school are uniformly good. Leaders and managers are currently setting much more challenging targets for individual pupils and class groups than previously. These are monitored extremely rigorously and any underachievement is now being identified quickly.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise the school's expectations of the pupils and take closer account of information from assessments in planning for their different needs - good
- Improve the quality of the curriculum for English, mathematics and ICT - satisfactory

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management in steering the school towards higher standards and better quality provision remains a key strength. There is a clear focus on continually driving the school forward through identifying key weaknesses, providing whole school and individual staff development, setting targets and monitoring improvements. The new partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher is working very well and is helping to increase the rate of improvements through the school. The programme for extending the expertise of middle managers has worked very well and they are now very confident in their roles with clear plans for future action. This is no longer an improvement issue. The previous weakness of monitoring is now a key strength of the school with the headteacher and deputy headteacher carrying this out skilfully. More members of staff are developing this expertise in this area with particularly good quality monitoring in mathematics.

The IEB continues its very high quality work in supporting the headteacher in moving the school forward. The shadow governing body is in place and is working with the IEB. Its members are undertaking training to develop their expertise and understanding of their new roles. The strategy of a member of the IEB also being a member of the shadow governing is proving effective in providing continuity between the two bodies.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Monitor the implementation of planned improvements closely, and evaluate their impact on pupils' achievement - good
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in holding the school to account for the quality of education and standards attained by the pupils – good

External support

The quality of the local authority support continues to be good and is flexible to meet the school's specific developing needs. The school improvement partner works effectively to ensure that the LA resources are used well to respond to the changing needs of the schools. The range of LA consultants continues to support the school's key improvement areas. The governors section has been particularly effective in constituting and supporting the shadow governing body. The two National Leaders in Education continue to provide valuable support that targets the school's specific needs extremely well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and increase achievement through providing a better match of work to different pupils' needs.
- Increase progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Improve the consistency in the daily reading sessions including, the rigour in the teaching of the adult led group, the effectiveness of all independent activities, the reading journals and the recording of individuals' progress.
- Plan the actions needed to raise standards in science.