

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

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30 December 2008

Mr Colin Lofthouse  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Lofthouse

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Throckley Primary School

Following my visit with Kathryn Dodd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2008.

The letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

Progress since being subject to special measure – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the IEB and the Director of Children's Services for Newcastle.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

Special measures: monitoring of Throckley Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 November 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 14 parts of lessons. A range of documents was scrutinised and meetings held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, representatives of the interim executive board (IEB), nominated staff, a group of pupils, and the school improvement partner/local authority representative (SIP/LA). Inspectors also conducted some informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.

### Context

Since the previous inspection, a new senior management team has been formed. In addition to the headteacher, there is a new deputy headteacher and newly appointed phase leaders for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. New responsibilities for the core subjects have been delegated to the deputy headteacher and the two key stage leaders. Subject leadership of literacy was taken by the EYFS leader in June, and was taken over by the deputy headteacher on the 7th November to allow the EYFS leader more dedicated time to the early year's provision. The governing body was disbanded immediately following the Ofsted inspection and an IEB was set up in its place. The SIP/LA officer attends all IEB meetings, as do the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.

### Achievement and standards

At the time of the previous inspection, achievement and standards were inadequate. A similar picture of achievement and standards still exists. At Foundation Stage, children start school with the levels expected for their age in the majority of areas of learning, except in communication, language and literacy, in particular speaking and listening, which are below expectations. By the time they reach the start of statutory schooling, the children have made inadequate progress overall, with lower than expected levels across almost all the areas of learning. The unvalidated data from the 2008 teacher assessments and national tests indicate good progress at Key Stage 1, with pupils achieving broadly average standards. At Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is inadequate and standards below average when they leave the school at the end of Year 6. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities follows a similar pattern to that seen in the rest of the school, and is inadequate overall. However, concerted efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are beginning to make a slow and observable difference in the progress being made by pupils across the school. There remains, however, too much variation in pupils' performance between different year groups, especially at Key Stage 2. The school is alert to these variations, and

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

has started to develop more robust methods for collecting and analysing performance data that will help it effectively target underperforming pupils.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2008:

- Improve the progress of pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, by improving the quality of teaching and learning -inadequate

### Personal development and well-being

At the time of the previous inspection, pupils' personal development and well-being were judged to be inadequate. These are now satisfactory. A strong focus on promoting better attendance with both pupils and parents is starting to make a positive difference in the attendance rates, particularly with those previously deemed to be 'persistent absentees'. The pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and express their delight in the many rewards they get to celebrate their achievements in this area. This improvement is occurring alongside the early signs of improving provision across all aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. In lessons, pupils behave well and show a keen level of interest when the work provides sufficient challenge. However, pupils become restless and find it hard to concentrate in some lessons where the work fails to inspire or challenge their thinking. The pupils are increasingly contributing to the school's improvement. They now have a greater opportunity to have their views heard and to influence aspects of the way the school works; this is helping to foster an improved sense of school community and reflects well in the pupils' enjoyment of school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2008:

- Improve attendance with a particular focus on the high proportion of children who take authorised absence - satisfactory

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection due to effective in-class support from external specialists and more robust monitoring by senior staff that helps teachers to be more aware of areas for improvement. Although there is still some inadequate teaching, the overall quality is now more consistently satisfactory or better than seen at the time of the previous inspection. There is greater variation in the quality of teaching seen in Key Stage 2 than found in Key Stage 1 or the EYFS. Lesson planning seen during the inspection was generally satisfactory, although there were some examples of good quality planning where teachers had skilfully combined teaching tasks and activities with well formed and articulated outcomes for pupils' learning. The scrutiny by senior managers of lesson planning is helping the staff to know where improvements are needed, and how effective their planning is in helping to raise standards and improve the

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

rate of pupils' progress. Senior managers are well placed to re-focus the school's priorities and actions for future improvements on those aspects of teaching and learning that will have the greatest impact on pupils' standards and progress. The majority pupils are becoming better informed about how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve further. However, the effective use of pupil performance information is variable across classes, which currently limits its overall impact on improving provision.

Links with parents have strengthened since the previous inspection. The systems for communicating with parents, both formally and informally are becoming better established. All those parents who spoke with inspectors said that they welcome the informal opportunities they have with staff to discuss any concerns, and they recognise the efforts made to extend their involvement in the school; for example, the newly parent teacher body, the encouragement of parent helpers, and the range of workshops such as how to promote healthy meals.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2008:

- Improve communication with, and involvement of, parents, carers and the community - satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The school, in partnership with its external partners and the LA, acted quickly to tackle the areas for improvement following the inspection in May 2008. Immediate action was taken to disband the governing body and replace it with an IEB. The final composition of the group was established in September of this term. There is now a good balance of expertise on the Board, with a number of educational specialists ably supporting and challenging the work of the school. The minutes from the regular monthly meetings indicate the level of challenge posed, and the quality of support provided for senior managers in the school. The recent decision of the board to create two sub-groups that will each focus on particular improvement areas has worked well, and is adding greater knowledge and understanding of the progress being made across all five improvement areas.

Leadership and management within the school have also undergone considerable change since May. Some key appointments have been made to the senior management team, including a new deputy headteacher and phase leaders for the EYFS, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Although there was some realignment of management responsibilities during the summer term, including the redistribution of responsibility for the core subjects, these members of the senior leadership team have only begun to operate collectively since September. The school is aware that while some important improvements have been made, for example, in the leadership of developing an integrated provision for Nursery and Reception within the EYFS, the pace of change will need to accelerate in order ensure that improvements in

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

leadership and management are both maintained and developed further, especially in terms of influencing the quality of teaching and learning, and the achievement and standards of the pupils. This relates particularly to the development of all the phase and core subject leaders.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2008:

- Improve the leadership of the leadership of the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 2 and the core subjects - satisfactory
- Improve the capacity of the governing body to evaluate the work of the school and hold it to account - satisfactory

### External support

Following Ofsted's judgment that the original LA statement of action needed to include more specific costs and the extent to which it was aware of problems in the school, a revised and clearer action plan has been produced, which now addresses these areas. The action plan is being used well to allocate additional and appropriate specialist support in literacy and numeracy. There is effective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress against the five improvement issues, primarily through the regular attendance of the SIP/LA adviser at IEB meetings. These meetings are helping to ensure a regular dialogue and sharing of information between the school and the local authority. The dual role of the LA adviser and SIP is working well and is providing an effective critical friend to the IEB and headteacher. The reports produced provide a clear overview of progress, and are well received by the headteacher and members of the IEB.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Assess and plan activities that better match the range of abilities in the EYFS.