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18 December 2008

Mr Eddie Izzard
The Headteacher
Winklebury Junior School
Willoughby Way
Basingstoke
RG23 8AF

Dear Mr Izzard

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Winklebury Junior School

Following my visit with Stephanie Matthews, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 December 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 June 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

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 vice-chair of governors and the Director of Children Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Winklebury Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject coordinators, groups of pupils, the acting chair of governors and representatives from the local authority.

Context

At the time of the monitoring inspection the deputy headteacher was absent on extended sick leave.

Achievement and standards

The unvalidated results of the national tests in 2008 indicate that standards have declined further and were low in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. A comparison of these results with those the pupils achieved at the end of Year 2 shows that a third did not make the expected progress in English, and two thirds fell short of expectations in mathematics.

A scrutiny of the pupils' exercise books shows considerable inconsistency in the quantity and quality of their work. There are many examples of incomplete and poorly presented tasks. Expectations of what pupils can achieve vary and, overall, are not high enough.

In English, the pupils have more opportunities to write in a range of contexts but a structure and coherence, to accelerate progress, have not been established. Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are becoming evident in some lessons, most notably in one Year 6 class. In addition, the mathematics coordinator's analysis of recent assessments shows better recent progress in some, but not all, classes. In science, standards are very low and it is evident that the pupils have many gaps in their skills and knowledge. While the teachers are providing more opportunities for scientific investigation, there is no strategy to develop the pupils' skills so that they gain maximum benefit from these opportunities.

The considerable inconsistency in the progress the pupils make is hindering efforts to raise standards and achievement throughout the school.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour is not as good as it should be in some lessons. Some pupils do not settle quickly enough to the tasks they are set and are easily distracted. Sometimes, low-level chatter and inattention punctuate lessons and slow progress. While general behaviour is acceptable, the pupils do not enter and leave lessons in an orderly manner.

Although relationships between the pupils and their teachers are generally positive, the pupils do not always fully engage in lessons and there is considerable variation in their attitudes to learning. Attitudes to healthy eating are not well established. One girl commented that 'People are not interested in healthy eating.' The school provides a range of opportunities for the pupils to take exercise but the tuck shop sells crisps and chocolate predominantly, alongside a small selection of fruit.

Quality of provision

The profile of the quality of teaching remains inadequate because there are too few good lessons in which the pupils make rapid progress in developing the skills and knowledge they need to reach acceptable standards. In most lessons, the teaching is satisfactory but, in one lesson observed, uncooperative and inattentive behaviour severely restricted progress. In another, there was a lack of clarity about what pupils were expected to learn. The upper and lower school leaders provide examples of good and effective teaching but their skills are not being used sufficiently to improve the overall quality of teaching.

The match of work to the pupils' abilities is not sharp enough in many lessons because the links between target setting, marking and planning remain tenuous. Many of the pupils' books contain targets to help them to improve but they are not referred to often enough in lessons or when teachers mark their work. Some teachers acknowledge the pupils' success in reaching a target but in too many books there is no record of progress towards them. While some progress is being made in developing assessment, marking, target setting and planning, it is rather piecemeal and lacks the coherence needed to accelerate the pupils' progress.

The curriculum has been reviewed and an improved plan has emerged that ensures the curriculum has a better balance and greater breadth. Links between subjects have improved and there is a better focus on speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum. Within the new curriculum plan, science has an appropriately higher status, but there is no strategy to teach the pupils the skills and knowledge they need to benefit from a more investigative approach. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of after-school clubs. A particularly effective addition is the science club, which caters for those pupils with the potential to reach high standards.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- make better use of assessment to accelerate the progress made by pupils
– inadequate

Leadership and management

The headteacher has an increasingly clear view of the school's weaknesses and acknowledges the improvements that are needed. The school's improvement plans set out an appropriate, if extensive, agenda but implementation is erratic and unclear. Subject coordinators and upper and lower school leaders are keen to bring about rapid improvements but are not given direction or empowered to accelerate the pace of change. The approach to school improvement lacks urgency and clarity. As a result, some members of staff are confused about what is expected of them.

The senior leadership team is below strength and much of the monitoring of the quality of teaching has been carried out by the headteacher. The resulting records of lesson observations are not sufficiently evaluative or analytical to provide the teachers with clear guidance on how to improve lessons.

The local authority has used its powers to appoint two additional governors but a number of vacancies remain. The acting chair of governors has recently resigned. Following an emergency governing body meeting, the local authority is to extend its appointed representation to five members. No progress has been made in extending the governing body's role in holding the school to account.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the impact of leaders and managers at all levels so that they make their full contribution to raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning – inadequate
- strengthen governance, particularly in monitoring the school's performance more systematically, so that governors can hold it to account – inadequate

External support

The local authority statement of action fulfils requirements. The school has received a wide range of support from advisers and consultants but, by general consensus, its impact has been limited because strategies and advice are implemented in a piecemeal and inconsistent manner.

Priorities for further improvement

Establish high expectations of good behaviour and promote positive attitudes to learning in all lessons.