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Mr Mike Barnes
Headteacher
Fleetwood Flakefleet Primary School
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Fleetwood
Lancashire
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Dear Mr Barnes

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fleetwood Flakefleet Primary School

Following my visit with Andrew Scott and Jim Bennetts Additional Inspectors to your school on 24 and 25 March 2009, 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 January 2008. 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 may not be appointed.

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 Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Fleetwood Flakefleet Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 24-25 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, a group of pupils, two governors, and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

There have been no changes in context since the last inspection.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain below average but they are improving. The schools current assessment data indicate that higher percentages of pupils are currently on track to reach the expected levels in English and mathematics than in 2008, although the figures are not quite expected to reach national averages. Proportions on track to achieve the higher level 5, although steadily improving, remain below average. In Key Stage 1, current assessment data indicate that overall outcomes will be similar in 2009 but with English as the stronger subject. Pupil mobility continues to be a factor affecting school performance, with above average numbers joining the school at a late stage in their primary education, while geographical relocations result in others leaving.

Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are now well established using an online system which all class teachers can access and update. Assessment information is routinely collected at regular intervals and analysed to show rates of progress and to identify underachievers who are then specifically targeted. The targeted support and intervention strategies are overseen by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and involve additional in-class support as well as separate group activities. These are helping to tackle weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The school's evaluations of these intervention strategies show that they are helping the vast majority of pupils involved to make better progress although pockets of underachievement remain. A recent initiative to provide additional one-to-one support for selected Year 6 pupils after school has been well received by pupils.

Pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in most of their numeracy and literacy lessons, and in some lessons it is good. Nevertheless the legacy of underachievement has not yet been eradicated. In some lessons although tasks are tailored to meet a range of needs, some pupils are capable of making more rapid progress.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and increase progress especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The school has worked hard to develop strategies to raise aspirations and improve self-esteem and this shows in the increasing confidence with which many pupils talk and respond to questions. 'High fliers' assemblies and notice boards give prominence to high achievement and encourage high aspirations. Pupils are increasingly ready to share their ideas and elaborate on these in lessons. An assembly about the ingredients for a happy life captured pupils' attention and helped encourage them to persevere and show determination in the face of difficulties. Attitudes to learning are often good, but where teaching does not engage or maintain interest pupils sometimes become distracted or drift off task. Behaviour in lessons and around school is generally good, but some pupils have concerns about playground behaviour, especially at lunchtime.

Attendance remains below the national average. Although attendance for the current academic year is better than last year it remains below the target set by the local authority. A range of strategies is in place to improve attendance. The new electronic registration system ensures that absence is followed up quickly on the first day. Assemblies and rewards are used to promote the importance of attendance, and many pupils do attend well. The proportion of persistent absentees has reduced but remains above average. A key feature of the work of the learning mentor is her focus on these pupils and their families, as well as others with below average attendance. There have been significant improvements in the attendance of some individuals as a result of her work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning have improved since the last monitoring visit. The proportion of good teaching remains similar and significantly, there was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during this visit. However, the school's view that a high proportion of teaching is now good or better is not fully borne out by inspectors' findings. Regular monitoring by senior managers continues to focus on key aspects of teaching and learning. Good practice is shared among staff but not all opportunities for professional development are maximised, in such areas as peer mentoring. As a partial consequence of this, the quality of teaching and learning is not consistent throughout the school. Mostly good teaching in upper Key Stage 2 is helping to address the legacy of underachievement by Year 6; learning is improving throughout the school, but it is a gradual rather than a swift process.

There are a number of common features within teaching. Teachers share their planning across year groups in order to ensure that pupils have the same learning

opportunities. Teachers' planning is well structured and highlights different expectations of pupils with different abilities. Teachers use assessment to plan suitable work for these different groups. Pupils are often well challenged in lessons but not routinely and with insufficient regard for their individual potential. At times, teachers do not fully allow for the fact that pupils learn in different ways, for example that more able pupils do not require the same small steps of learning as less able pupils. Similarly, teachers do not give pupils enough scope to develop appropriate skills. For example, pupils do not have enough opportunity to design their own investigations in science. Consequently, in some lessons some pupils do not make good headway all the time: progress is not as good as it could be.

The most successful lessons have a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. The rapport between staff and pupils is mutually respectful. Teachers exude confidence and provide pupils not only with challenge but with a rich curricular diet, especially in writing. The school recognises that pupils need broader experiences and a richer vocabulary in order to write more skilfully, and some teachers are adept at providing these. The better lessons also have a greater sense of urgency. Pupils know precisely what is expected in a given time and respond well; as a result, the pace of learning accelerates. They also gain the self-confidence that enables them to work more productively on their own.

Teachers follow a curriculum that reflects the national strategies and other guidelines. As a result, there is a constant emphasis on the acquisition of key skills and pupils learn them methodically. Some learning is given additional meaning and purpose by linking subjects or using real life observations. For example, the excitement of wriggling tadpoles in the Nursery prompted some very good paintings. In some lessons pupils' have too few opportunities to apply their knowledge. Furthermore, routine tasks do not give pupils enough chance to exercise their mental agility.

Teachers and teaching assistants are supportive of pupils' learning in lessons. They are sensitive in their questioning and tease out answers rather than simply supplying information. Pupils have clear curricular targets to aim for over time and some have good, informal, short-term targets linked to their class work. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. Marking is variable. It is usually supportive and encouraging, but it is mainly in pupils' writing books that the best marking is seen. There is clear advice on how to improve, although teachers could be more insistent that weaknesses are addressed.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the marking of work and use of assessment systems to plan activities that will accelerate pupils' learning and inform them how to make progress – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The leadership team that had been set up by the time of the last visit has established the roles of its members more firmly. The assistant headteacher, who was new to the school at the start of this school year, is now able to take a more active part in sharing responsibility in the limited management time available to him. The school has continued to benefit from the advice and support of the local authority. There are improvements in standards and an increasing capacity within the senior team to lead development. Therefore, initiative for development is, rightly, beginning to be passed from the local authority to subject coordinators and other leaders in the school. For example, the mathematics coordinator is leading staff training on different elements of the subject and key stage coordinators and other leaders are sharing with staff the training that they themselves have had, for instance, in promoting the achievement of higher ability pupils.

The procedures for monitoring the work of teachers and pupils' progress that had been implemented at the time of the last visit have been embedded. For all teachers, a lesson is observed by senior staff each half term and their planning is checked weekly. Pupils' books are scrutinised. However, quality assurance practices have not yet become sufficiently refined. The quality of teaching is improving but there is insufficient good teaching. Teachers' planning is diligent. Lessons have alternative tasks for pupils of different ability for much of the time and pupils are given a clear picture of what they have to do. Yet in some lessons, whole-class teaching continues for too long, sometimes with some elements of it too trivial for the more able, or occasionally beyond the less able. The specific weaknesses demonstrated by individual pupils are not always picked up and attended to. There is a lack of clarity about what exactly a pupil needs to accomplish to move on to the next sub-level. Lessons often follow a structure that teachers believe to be advocated by national initiatives without considering sufficiently whether what is planned is likely to meet the needs of their pupils well.

The governing body has been strengthened by two additional governors who have experience of governance elsewhere. Governors have a shrewd appreciation of how things stand and a determination for improvement in the school's work. They recognise the improvements that have been made and value the motivation and commitment shown by staff. Governors realise that insistence is required to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They are mindful of their role in ensuring that there is a firm approach to further improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve monitoring and evaluation procedures to gain a more accurate picture of what needs attention and to draw up precise action plans to eradicate underachievement – satisfactory

- Develop the monitoring role of the governors so that they play a more active part in helping the school to improve – satisfactory

External support

Staff value the extensive support provided by the local authority. With increasing strengths within the school, more responsibility for initiatives is being taken by senior staff. Training provided by the local authority and its consultants to individual staff is being disseminated within the school. Teachers have benefited from guidance which has improved their subject knowledge and introduced them to some current thinking on the kind of lessons that can go well. They are beginning to take a reflective view in planning lessons that use time well, accommodating what they have gathered from advice to meet actual needs in their own classrooms.