

## PROTECT - INSPECTION

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30 April 2009

Mr Colin Lofthouse  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Colin Lofthouse

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Throckley Primary School

Following my visit with Joseph Clark, Additional Inspector, to your school on 31 March and 1 April 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 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 interim executive board and the Director of Education and Standards at Newcastle upon Tyne.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake  
H M Inspector

## Special measures: monitoring of Throckley Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 31 March and 1 April 2009

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 10 parts of lessons and one assembly. Documents were scrutinised and meetings held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other nominated staff, groups of pupils, and members of the interim executive board (IEB). There were also telephone discussions with a representative from the local authority and the school improvement partner. Inspectors also conducted some informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.

### Context

Since the previous visit in November 2008, the headteacher and deputy have assumed responsibility for numeracy and literacy respectively, and together with the Early Years Foundation Stage manager, Key Stage 1 manager and assessment leader make up the senior leadership team in the school. Two teachers have left the school since the previous visit. There is one long-term supply teacher working in the Year 6 class. From the start of the summer term, a full-time member of staff will transfer from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the Year 3 class, replacing the current supply teachers.

### Achievement and standards

Pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate due to the focused work on raising standards across the school, more robust evaluation and monitoring of teaching, and better quality collection, analysis and use of performance data in literacy and numeracy. As a result of these improvements, the majority of teachers are now providing better matched and more challenging lesson content for the pupils. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, more accurate baseline assessment of the children shows that, contrary to previous analyses of broadly average starting points, the majority start school in the Nursery with lower than expected levels for their age in the majority of areas of learning; communication, language and literacy, in particular speaking and listening, remains the weakest area. The most recent assessments in February show that the majority of children at both early and later stages of the Early Years Foundation Stage have made at least satisfactory or better progress since the previous inspection visit. This means, therefore, that at current rates of progress, a far greater proportion is on line to achieve average standards by the start of statutory schooling than seen in previous years. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress because teaching generally ensures a focused match to pupils' needs and abilities. However, in Key Stage 2, progress made by different groups is too variable because not all teachers tailor their lessons to meet the diverse range of

pupils' learning needs and capabilities. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that seen in the rest of the school, and is generally better in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, than in Key Stage 2.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and continuing to improve, although a small minority of pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour, which disrupts their own and others' learning. The school is successfully tackling this through its five-stage discipline policy. Pupils say there is still a little bit of bullying, but not as much as there used to be, and that it is reducing rapidly as behaviour improves. Pupils know who to turn to if they have any concerns and initiatives such as playground buddies help to provide support and reassurance, if needed.

Attendance continues to improve, partly because of the school's efforts in targeting improved attendance but also because pupils' enjoyment of school is increasing. Improved teaching and learning, and a wider range of extra-curricular activities, are providing pupils with a greater incentive to come to school more regularly. Attendance this term is the highest yet but overall attendance continues to be adversely affected by unauthorised absence, mainly due to parents taking holidays in school time, especially at the beginning of the school year. The school is working hard to reduce the number of unauthorised absences and is having some success. The unauthorised absence figures over the past six months, when compared with the same period last year, show that the gap between the school's average and the national average is reducing.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy a good range of opportunities to take on responsibility and exercise their leadership skills; for example, as monitors, school councillors or office assistants. These play an important part in the smooth running of the school as well as improving pupils' confidence and raising their self-esteem.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning continue to improve because the range of strategies employed to improve these areas are having some success. Monitoring of lessons by senior leaders and the local authority has identified where teaching needs to be

improved. In-service training and the modelling of good practice has increased the proportion of satisfactory or better lessons by almost 100% in the last twelve months. Inadequate teaching has virtually, but not entirely, been eliminated. The weakest teaching has improved particularly through targeted support. While there is improvement, there is still too much satisfactory teaching, especially at Key Stage 2, which is not helping the full ability range to make the progress in their learning of which they are capable; this applies, in particular, to higher attaining pupils.

Most lesson plans set clear learning objectives, so pupils know what they are to learn. Relationships are very positive and provide encouragement and support for learning. Where teaching is strongest there is a clear focus on providing a good level of challenge for all ability groups, especially higher attaining pupils. The majority of lessons have a clear purpose, good pace, and a range of interesting and varied learning activities. Marking is helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work. Weaker lessons are characterised by a lack of suitable and ongoing challenge, especially, but not exclusively, for the higher attaining pupils. Although the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to present lessons is generally good, pupils' personal use of ICT to support their learning across all subjects is weak. Teaching assistants provide effective support, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Links with parents continue to improve. Parents are clear that the school now communicates with them more regularly than ever before. They appreciate the weekly newsletters and are aware of the emphasis the school places on regular attendance. Regular parent surveys are conducted, and feedback is taken seriously and acted upon. For example, the structure of pupil progress meetings with parents has been changed following dissatisfaction with previous arrangements. Overall, parents are happy with the way the school now communicates with them.

There has been good improvement in planning and assessing activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a priority for improvement from the previous visit. Ongoing assessment opportunities are built into every lesson and activity, and are an integral part of the teaching. There has been effective staff training to ensure that teachers and adults have good knowledge and understanding of children's learning and developmental requirements. Consequently, assessment through observations is founded on a secure understanding of how children should be learning and developing, and how well they are performing against age-related expectations.

The quality of the curriculum has improved across the school since the previous visit. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum now has a clearer focus and better planning and provision to meet the children's needs across all areas of learning. The increased emphases in literacy and numeracy at both Key Stages 1 and 2 are well balanced against the demands of other circular areas.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

### Leadership and management

The school has maintained a good pace of development at all levels of leadership and management since the previous inspection visit. The IEB has retained a good balance of expertise, which is being used very effectively to support and challenge the school. The strategy of two sub-groups from the IEB taking responsibility for monitoring progress of different improvement areas, relatively new at the time of the previous visit, has worked well and is providing a very clear overview of the progress being made by the school. Focused school visits by members of the board are being used to good effect to help senior leaders assess more accurately, the impact of identified priorities and actions.

The changes made to senior leadership and management at the start of the school year have been consolidated, and now include a member of staff with specific responsibility for assessment. This latter role has developed well in relation to the job brief, namely, to collect and analyse pupil performance data in literacy and numeracy. However, it is yet to develop more fully to include performance data in science, other subjects of the curriculum, and the use of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile as an indicator of the pupils' attainment at the start of their statutory schooling. The departure of the numeracy coordinator at the end of the autumn term resulted in a realignment of key subject responsibilities, with the headteacher assuming leadership of mathematics, including numeracy, across the school. This now means that responsibility for two of the three core subjects rests with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. This strategy has worked well, particularly because both these senior staff have maintained a regular pattern of lesson monitoring and evaluation, which has helped the school to retain a very accurate overview of the quality of provision and further areas for development. However, the role of the science coordinator in contributing to the overview of the quality of provision in the subject is underdeveloped. There has been good improvement in the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage since the previous visit. Clear leadership and direction is enthusing the team of teachers and assistants in their implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 - good

## External support

There is effective local authority support for the school, especially in the targeted school-based work in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in literacy and numeracy. Support plans are sufficiently detailed to ensure that the most important actions are taken to provide the school with relevant and up-to-date advice on improving practice, as an aid to raising standards and improving pupils' progress in their learning. This, in turn, is helping to improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning across the school. There is effective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress against the five improvement issues by both the local authority and the school improvement partner. Reports of progress are generally clear and concise, providing an additional and important source of information about the school's capacity to address the issues raised in the inspection report of 2008.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the role of the science coordinator, to include a more clearly defined evaluation and monitoring role in line with the developments that have taken place literacy and numeracy.
- Develop the role of the assessment coordinator to include the collation and use of pupil performance data from the Foundation Stage Profile and all three core subjects.