

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



29 January 2009

Mrs J Dale
The Headteacher
Fosse Primary School
Balfour Street
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE3 5EA

Dear Mrs Dale

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fosse Primary School

Following my visit with Sheila Boyle and Krishan Sharma, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 27 and 28 January 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 April 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 local authority, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Fosse Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 27 and 28 January 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the interim headteacher, the associate headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the coordinators for English, mathematics and science, the chair of governors, the headteacher designate and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in October 2008, the school temporarily reconvened its governing body. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has since approved the setting up of an Interim Executive Board (IEB). The IEB is due to meet for the first time on 9 February. A new headteacher has been appointed and he will take up his post at the start of the summer term 2009. One of the part time teaching posts in Year 1 is currently filled by a temporary teacher whilst the substantive teacher is on maternity leave.

Achievement and standards

The school's own assessment data indicates that the proportion of pupils working at the level expected for their age is steadily growing across the school. Nevertheless, standards remain well below average in English, mathematics and science. A significant proportion of pupils are still underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics and the rate at which they progress varies across the school. Although many pupils are making satisfactory progress, this is not sufficient to fill gaps in pupils' learning and make up for previous underachievement.

Evidence from observations of lessons and scrutinies of pupils' work show that, although many pupils are now making satisfactory or better progress, too many pupils are still underachieving. In particular, the most able pupils and those with learning difficulties make the slowest progress. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 6 generally make better progress than those in other year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils mostly have good attitudes to their work and behave well in lessons. However, when lessons lack challenge or progress at a slow pace, pupils quickly lose interest and frequently engage in irrelevant chatter. In the most effective lessons, pupils demonstrate mature attitudes and cooperate well with each other.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring visit. Although there has not been a significant increase in the proportion of good or better teaching, there has been a considerable reduction in the amount of inadequate teaching. As a result, the progress that pupils make in their learning is improving. However, there is not enough teaching which is good or better to enable all pupils to progress quickly enough to fill the gaps in their learning.

In the few good lessons seen, pupils made good progress because teachers' expectations were high and activities were well planned to challenge pupils of all abilities. These lessons progress at a good pace and are well organised. They have clear learning objectives which are understood by the pupils. Teachers use questioning well to assess learning throughout the lessons. Pupils are motivated by the activities and are keen to succeed. Another strength seen in these lessons, as well as in others throughout the school, was the good use of appropriate technical vocabulary. For example, pupils are taught and encouraged to use correct scientific or mathematical terminology. In these effective lessons, teaching assistants support groups or individuals well through careful questioning and encouragement. However, in too many lessons, teaching assistants are not deployed effectively and opportunities for them to support learning are missed.

In the majority of lessons, activities are not carefully enough matched to meet the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, too many pupils are not challenged and they do not make as much progress as they could. Lessons are frequently over directed by the teacher. This limits opportunities for pupils to interact or to use their own initiative. As a result, pupils lose interest in their work and make little progress. The resulting rise in noise level frequently disrupts learning in adjacent teaching areas. Teachers do not always assess pupils' progress thoroughly as lessons progress and miss opportunities to extend pupils' learning. In a few lessons, teachers interrupt pupils too frequently by repeatedly talking to the whole class, and this disrupts their learning. Resources are not always well organised and, as a result, pupils spend too much time looking for pencils or waiting for their work books. On occasions, pupils are engaged in unnecessary activities such as cutting out and sticking activities which are of little value to their planned learning.

Work is marked regularly and pupils have a good understanding about how well they have done. However, they do not receive sufficient written guidance about how to improve their work. Although some developmental marking is beginning in literacy, it is not yet having a noticeable impact on pupils' learning.

The science scheme of work has been improved and there is a satisfactory plan to ensure that pupils now receive their full curriculum entitlement. Increasingly, pupils have opportunities to develop scientific skills of investigation, enquiry and recording. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 undertook an investigation about the properties

of yeast. Pupils in Year 3 planned an investigation to see which materials are the best insulators. In both lessons pupils demonstrated skills of enquiry and investigation as well as having opportunities to develop their recording skills.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve standards and achievements in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that teaching and the curriculum consistently provide the right level of challenge for all pupils – satisfactory
- ensure that all aspects of the science curriculum are covered in sufficient depth, especially in Years 1 and 2 – good.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and subject coordinators are working well with the support of local authority consultants to carry out a comprehensive range of monitoring and evaluation activities. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff at all levels fully understand the challenges facing the school and there is a clear sense of determination to address the significant weaknesses that remain. However, the skills that subject coordinators need to enable them to facilitate the required improvements to teaching and learning are underdeveloped. As a result, although significant improvements have been made to provision, these are not improving the progress pupils make in their learning quickly enough. For example, there is now consistency in the way teachers plan lessons, but the way these lessons are delivered varies considerably. Consequently, in too many lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

The introduction of routine lesson observations and learning walks is a sensible initiative. However, the written evaluations prepared following these observations and other monitoring activities do not always provide sufficient guidance to help teachers to improve quickly. Although reports from lesson observations, scrutinies of teachers' planning or reviews of pupils' work include detailed description of the strengths and weaknesses found, they lack detailed evidence about the progress pupils are making in their learning. Teachers are not provided with sufficiently clear guidance about how to improve their practice.

The school has established a suitable system to assess and track the attainment and progress of each pupil in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this is at an early stage of development and the school acknowledges that moderation processes are insufficiently robust. Consequently, the current data is not reliable and the school is in the process of addressing this.

The establishment of a specialist team to lead developments in science is a sensible initiative which is already having a significant impact on pupils' learning. The science team has carried out a detailed analysis of work in science and responded quickly to the shortcomings found. For example, the science curriculum has been improved and pupils are now benefiting from an appropriate range of opportunities to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding. The team has a good understanding of

further work that needs to be completed in order to improve teachers' subject knowledge and ensure that assessment systems are rigorous.

Since the last monitoring visit, the governing body has successfully recruited a new headteacher. It has also monitored the progress the school is making through informal visits and routine reports from the headteacher. However, the work of the governing body has now been suspended following the establishment of an IEB. The IEB will hold its first meeting in early February.

The school's procedures for the safeguarding of pupils do not fully meet government requirements. The headteacher and governing body are aware of the shortcomings and have plans in place to resolve this issue.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that self-evaluation is based on a rigorous and accurate analysis of the work of the school, including assessment data so that the school's leaders identify and address weaknesses at the early stages – satisfactory
- deal effectively with current weaknesses by implementing the plan to raise attainment swiftly and determinedly – satisfactory
- work with the local authority to recruit and train governors to monitor the work of the school and provide sufficient challenge – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide substantial support to the school. In particular, it has assisted the governing body with the appointment of a new headteacher. The planning of a rigorous interview process, including the preparation of very comprehensive supporting documentation for the appointment panel, has been of considerable benefit to the governing body. Support for subject coordinators and senior leaders has also continued through joint monitoring and evaluation activities. However, coordinators acknowledge that they still require further professional development, particularly to enable them to develop the skills of colleagues quickly and effectively. The local authority responded quickly to concerns raised during the last monitoring visit with regard to governance. The governing body was reconvened and was successful in appointing a new headteacher. The IEB has now been established.