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12 June 2009

Mr Richard Stone
The Headteacher
Fosse Primary School
Balfour Street
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Leicestershire
LE3 5EA

Dear Mr Stone

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fosse Primary School

Following my visit with Lynn Lowery and Jeffery Plumb to your school on 10 and 11 June 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 April 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.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the local authority, the chair of the interim executive board 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 third monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the coordinators for English, mathematics and science, the coordinator for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the vice chairperson of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in January 2009, an interim executive board has been established and has now met four times. The new headteacher took up his appointment at the start of the summer term. A second part-time teacher has left the school on maternity leave and two other full-time teachers are currently on long term sick leave. One of the Reception classes and the two Year 1 classes are currently being taught by supply teachers.

Achievement and standards

The school's assessment data indicates that the proportion of pupils working at the expected level for their age has increased in Years 2, 3 and 6 since the last monitoring visit. In the current Year 2, standards are similar to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a significant improvement on previous years. However, although pupils in Year 6 make good progress, standards for them remain below average in English and science, and well below average in mathematics because of the gaps in their learning due to previous underachievement.

Evidence from observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that, although many pupils make satisfactory or better progress, too many pupils continue to underachieve. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 make insufficient progress in English, mathematics and science. In mathematics, progress is also slow for pupils in Years 1 and 3, contributing to the lower standards in this subject at Key Stage 2. There are inconsistencies in progress across the two Year 1 classes, with too many pupils in that year group making insufficient gains in writing skills. Overall, pupils with learning difficulties now make progress in reading which is in line with their peers, with some making good progress in reading and writing. Progress remains too slow for more able pupils. Generally, pupils in Years 2 and 6 make better progress than those in other year groups.

Personal development and well-being

Overall, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Where teaching is challenging and interesting they engage with learning enthusiastically. Behaviour is consistently good

throughout the school, both in lessons and at play. This reflects a significant improvement in the learning culture established since the appointment of the new headteacher. Pupils are courteous, polite and keen to talk about their work.

Quality of provision

Since the last monitoring visit, the quality of teaching has improved. However, it remains inconsistent overall and too much of it is still not good enough to ensure pupils achieve as well as they can. In the more effective lessons seen, planning was detailed and matched well to the abilities of the pupils. Interesting, well resourced activities ensured pupils enjoyed their learning, were fully engaged and worked hard. Most of these lessons progressed at a brisk pace and, consequently, pupils achieved well. Teachers recognised their achievements and used praise effectively to develop pupils' confidence and motivation.

In the weaker lessons, pupils did not make sufficient progress because these lessons were not sufficiently well planned to meet the needs of the individual pupils. Learning intentions were not always sufficiently clear and pupils did not understand what they were supposed to be learning. In too many lessons, teachers did not make effective use of assessment to ensure that the learning activities provided a suitable level of challenge to ensure that all pupils could make good progress. In particular, work was frequently not challenging enough for higher attaining pupils and was too difficult for those pupils who find learning difficult. Low expectations about what pupils are capable of in some lessons result in too little work being completed and pupils making little progress. In a few lessons, teachers spend too long going over work pupils already understand, rather than using the time more effectively to move pupils on in their learning. Teachers are increasingly making use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. However, this useful technology is frequently not used to best effect and opportunities to enable pupils to use these resources themselves are limited. The support for pupils at the early stages of learning English is not sufficient to enable these pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

Marking remains inconsistent and is still not as effective as it could be in providing pupils with clear guidance about how to improve. Recent work to improve the quality of marking in English has been effective and there are good examples in Years 2, 5 and 6. In these year groups, teachers frequently provide pupils with helpful development points. They respond well to this guidance and, in the best examples, teachers follow this up when they mark subsequent pieces of work. As a result, many of these pupils make good progress.

Rigorous new tracking systems have accurately identified pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are underperforming. Effective intervention strategies have been implemented to support these pupils. For example, a programme to improve reading for pupils identified throughout the school has been very successful. These pupils have made good progress in plugging gaps in their learning resulting from previous underachievement.

Since the last monitoring visit, teaching staff have benefited from training on how to plan effective scientific lessons. As a result, there is now a strong focus on scientific investigation. Pupils are expected to predict what will happen in their investigations and take into account whether their tests are fair. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations and methods of recording their findings. Pupils' conclusions are frequently limited or unfinished. A new assessment scheme has been introduced to enable pupils to see how well they are achieving, but this is not being used systematically in all classes. Its impact is limited in terms of enabling teachers to plan work which is matched well to pupils' individual abilities.

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 – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The newly appointed headteacher has quickly gained a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has high expectations of what can be achieved and has articulated a clear vision for improvement. He has worked effectively with the staff and interim executive board to ensure that this vision is fully understood and that there is a shared drive towards school improvement. As a result, there have been significant improvements to the culture of the school. There is now a shared understanding of the school's needs and most staff work together effectively as a team to deliver results. Planning for further improvement is regularly updated with appropriate actions. However, the success criteria to measure the improvements the school is making are insufficiently precise. Consequently, it is difficult for the school to measure the effectiveness of its work.

The approach to improving the quality of teaching through lesson observations is far more rigorous than at the time of the last monitoring visit. A comprehensive programme of observations has been set up and any unsatisfactory teaching is quickly followed up through further visits. Judgements are based on Ofsted criteria for the quality of teaching, and improvement areas are clearly shown on lesson feedback for teachers. These improvement areas are appropriately linked to pupils' learning. As a result, the quality of teaching is continuing to improve. The school is aware that its lesson observation form could be further improved to make it more focused on individual teachers' specific needs.

Teachers are also benefiting from considerable professional development through a series of appropriately focused training sessions at staff meetings. These include helpful activities presented by local authority consultants as well as the expertise from within the staff team. Several members of staff are developing their skills

through national training programmes and useful materials from these activities are being shared with the whole staff team. However, the effectiveness of this work in developing the skills of teachers is not consistent throughout the school.

The school has put in place training to help develop the skills of the subject coordinators. This has been effective, for example in enabling coordinators to carry out a detailed analysis of pupils' progress in English based on assessment results. However, work to evaluate the quality of teachers' planning and pupils' work is underdeveloped. Monitoring activities are not sufficiently focused and they lack detailed evaluation of the quality of work in terms of pupils' learning.

The school's system to track the progress made by pupils has been further developed and is now being used to good effect. It is suitably robust and takes good account of specific groups of pupils. For example, those pupils with learning difficulties have been identified and monitored. As a result, underachieving pupils from this group have received effective support to address gaps in their learning. However, the tracking of pupils at the early stages of learning English is insufficiently developed.

The governance of the school has now been taken over by an interim executive board. The membership of this group has been planned well to include a good range of appropriate expertise to meet the needs of the school. The members have quickly gained a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through both detailed reports from the headteacher and the gathering of first hand evidence through visits to the school. The monthly meetings are clearly focused and are used effectively to question and challenge both the headteacher and the local authority. Consequently, those people responsible for the future of the school are being both supported and held to account in appropriate manner.

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 – good.

External support

The quality of the support from the local authority has been good since the last monitoring visit. In particular, it has ensured that the governance of the school has been improved through the setting up of an effective interim executive board. It has also provided good quality support to develop the skills of the newly appointed headteacher. Support and guidance for subject coordinators have continued, although further work is needed in this area in order to ensure that the work of these coordinators has sufficient impact on pupils' learning.