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01 June 2009

Mr Mark Gallacher
Headteacher
Morton Trentside Primary School
Crooked Billett Street
Morton
Gainsborough
Lincolnshire
DN21 3AH

Dear Mr Gallacher,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Morton Trentside Primary School

Following my visit with Rajinder Harrison, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 May 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 July 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 chair of governors and the Director of Education for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Ian Nelson

Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Morton Trentside Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 6 – 7 May 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, and the chair of governors. A representative of the local authority attended the final feedback meeting but there was no contact with the team during the inspection.

Context

The substantive headteacher remains absent on sick leave and the school is being led by the interim headteacher still. One teacher is on maternity leave until June 2009. One of the newly qualified teachers has passed her first year so there is only one now on the staff. The school is currently advertising for two new teachers to replace three who will be leaving at the end of the school year, with the teacher returning from maternity leave expected to take over the third vacant position. One governor resigned due to relocating to another part of the country.

Achievement and standards

The school's assessment information shows that the current Year 6 pupils have broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science though they are less competent with investigational mathematics and science than with their factual knowledge in these subjects. While the pupils have made the expected levels of progress since they took the national tests in Year 2 there is little evidence of any making more than expected progress over that period. The most able pupils, those who could be expected to gain the higher level 5 in the national tests, have not received challenging enough tasks to accelerate their progress and raise overall standards as a consequence.

Lesson observations revealed no differences in the achievement of girls and boys and the school has made good progress in eliminating this aspect of underachievement. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now good. As at the time of the last visit, progress is better at the top end of Key Stage 2 than at the lower end and is better in English than in mathematics and science. Although the school has recognised the need for more practical investigational work in mathematics and science and is now beginning to implement this, the impact is not evident yet in higher standards or faster progress. The same goes for raising standards of the more able where the school has recognised the issue. Teachers have been required to identify in their planning precisely what different ability groups need to learn next in each lesson based on an assessment of how well they have done in earlier ones but the implementation of this requirement is not consistent yet. This means that while the challenge and support for the least able is good, it is still less so for the most able who could achieve more.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics and increase rates of progress throughout the school – satisfactory.
- Improve girls' achievement at Key Stage 2 – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to behave very well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy their lessons, particularly when teachers go out of their way to make learning interesting and exciting. For example, Year 6 pupils are really enthusiastic about the work they are doing on World War 2 and Year 3 pupils enjoyed making three dimensional shapes from straws in a mathematics lesson. They respond very well when teachers give them timed targets for given tasks as seen in a Year 5 mathematics lesson. In most lessons, they are eager to learn, to contribute ideas and to work together or independently on their given tasks. The undercurrent of restlessness seen in the previous visit has been eliminated and there was no evidence on this visit of any pupils distracting others or causing the pace of learning to slow because of their behaviour. One parent commented on some bullying in one class though others were surprised at this comment. The parent also said that any bullying that did occur was very quickly dealt with and the pupils assured inspectors that bullying is not an issue. Overall personal development, attitudes and behaviour have improved since the last visit.

Quality of provision

Much of the teaching seen during the visit was good but it is still inconsistent, with too much that remains satisfactory. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The staff provide a warm and welcoming environment that makes effective use of the indoor and outdoor areas to excite children with a good range of appropriate activities and resources. As a result, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and a significant number are currently on track to achieve above average standards by the time they enter Year 1.

In Years 1 to 6 teaching seen during the visit was at least satisfactory and some of it was good. The best teaching enthused pupils by effective use of interactive whiteboards to capture and hold their attention and by tasks that matched their abilities and learning needs. In other lessons, however, pupils did the same task at the same level so that the most able were not really challenged to do better.

Although all lesson plans say what the class is expected to learn they do not say precisely enough what pupils of different abilities are to learn. In the best lessons, pupils receive regular ongoing feedback about how well they are doing and how to

make their work better, as in a Year 6 literacy lesson on World War 2. Very effective feedback to individuals made clear what was good about their writing and how they could make it even better but feedback of this quality is not consistent across all classes. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in supporting those who need extra help, or working with specific groups. They ask probing questions to extend pupils' thinking and understanding and offer useful feedback to individuals in the groups they work with.

While there is now more good teaching, and none that is inadequate, teaching has not yet fully addressed the need to plan learning for each ability group within a class to maximise the learning of all.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils, particularly the more able, make better progress and achieve challenging targets – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

A group of parents commented very positively on the impact of the interim headteacher on the school and praised his leadership and management style. They said they recognised good improvements since he took over and that their children are very fond of him. They consider him very approachable and commented on how the ethos of the school has changed under his leadership. Their only real criticism was that the targets the staff set for their children are not always expressed in language that makes them easy to understand.

The interim headteacher continues to give a good steer to the school, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and literacy coordinator. He has a very clear understanding of what is needed to move the school forward and has succeeded in eradicating inadequate teaching and improving the proportion that is good. The next challenge will be to ensure that the school makes good appointments to replace the teachers who are leaving and puts in place a good induction programme to ensure new and returning staff get off to a flying start. The governing body still has some vacancies and the support of the two local authority appointees. The governors remain fully committed to the school and are working hard to support staff in improving things and implementing the action plan. Their challenge now is to support the school through the impending staffing changes and to work with the local authority to establish stable long term leadership.

The school has a good range of assessment information in a useful format that shows very clearly how each year group is performing and highlights where the issues are that the school needs to tackle. While staff are familiar with this information not all teachers use it effectively enough to set learning objectives for

different ability groups within a lesson and they do not use a common lesson planning format.

There is a stronger focus now on pupils making more than satisfactory progress to redress past underachievement and raise standards but the impact of this is inconsistent. While underachievement has been eradicated, the school has not yet established good achievement consistently across all classes. Regular lesson observations by senior staff have focused on the quality of teaching and are now becoming more focused on the impact of that teaching on pupils' learning. Recent observations have had a particular focus on the achievement of different ability groups within a lesson, with plans for more of this type. This means that senior staff have a clear and accurate picture of teaching strengths and weaknesses across the school and can target support and resources to where they are most needed.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve leadership and management so that monitoring and evaluation at all levels are rigorous and action to remedy shortcomings is urgent and effective – satisfactory.

External support

The impact of the local authority support has been satisfactory. The interim headteacher has remained in post and the two extra governors continue to support the school. The school has been given ten days of teacher support for the newly qualified teachers and weekly visits to support the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has also agreed to fund a teaching and learning responsibility post for a year to replace one of the teachers who will be leaving at the end of the school year. The school improvement partner has made one half day visit to see how well the school is doing since the last monitoring visit.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all lesson plans show clearly the learning that different ability groups in a class need in order to build on prior learning.
- Simplify the language of pupils' learning targets, avoiding educational language, to make them easier for pupils and parents to understand.