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12 November 2009

Miss A Skelton  
Dearne Goldthorpe Primary School  
Barnsley Road  
Goldthorpe  
South Yorkshire  
S63 9NG

Dear Miss Skelton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Dearne Goldthorpe Primary School

Following my visit with Fiona Gowers and Jane Hughes, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 10-11 November 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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 Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families in Barnsley.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Dearne Goldthorpe Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 10-11 November 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents and pupils' books. They also met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

Staffing difficulties have reduced since the previous visit but are still not resolved. Consequently, continuity of learning is disrupted in around one third of classes, mostly in Key Stage 1.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Standards are below average but mostly improving. During the previous monitoring visit, analysis of the most recent, unvalidated, data showed that the only aspect of standards not improving was English in Key Stage 2. Following a thorough analysis of pupils' work, the school has identified that weakness in writing skills is the main barrier. Carefully planned measures to improve pupils' writing are beginning to bear fruit and there is evidence of better quality in structure, style and grammatical accuracy.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, although there is evidence of good progress in more classes than was the case in previous monitoring visits. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 2 where a notable feature is the improved progress of higher attaining pupils as a result of increased challenge in their work. Whereas progress was previously good in Key Stage 1, it is now satisfactory and the change is because of disrupted staffing. In both key stages, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is improving and, in about half of the classes, it is good. This is because recent changes in managing provision have resulted in a much more systematic approach to identifying pupils' needs and planning appropriate support. In the newly re-organised Early Years Foundation Stage unit, children are making better progress than in previous monitoring visits, although it is still satisfactory overall.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning has improved significantly since the first monitoring visit because they receive much better teaching and the curriculum is considerably more interesting. The majority are now thoroughly engaged in their work and keen to do their best.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance has improved since the previous monitoring visit although it is still below average and, overall, it has not improved sufficiently since the school was placed in special measures. The greatest improvement is the reduction of persistent absentees, which is the result of hard work and, where appropriate, strong action with the most serious individual cases. There is insufficient focus on using guidance and incentive with those children, and their families, whose absence is below average but not "persistent".

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly since the previous monitoring visit and exclusions are now reducing significantly. Their attitude to work is also much more positive. Good behaviour and attitudes are making a strong contribution to pupils' progress in lessons, particularly because their ability to work independently has improved so much.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance – satisfactory.

#### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although the proportion of good teaching has improved, especially in Key Stage 2. A notable feature of the more effective lessons is higher expectations for what all pupils can achieve. Tasks are adapted well to provide the correct level of challenge for all groups within the class. Carefully planned support enables pupils with special educational needs to work towards the same objectives as their classmates and to make good progress from their low starting points. The greater degree of consistency in good teaching is beginning to help pupils to catch up following a long period of underachievement. In the lessons where teaching is less effective, introductory explanations do not engage all pupils or there is insufficient challenge for many pupils in their independent activities.

The re-organisation of the two Early Years Foundation Stage classes into one integrated unit is bringing about a noticeable improvement in teaching and independent learning across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 1 with under-developed skills and knowledge make slow progress because the school does not continue to provide the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and assessment methods that they still need.

Although teachers are working hard to improve assessment, the school is not making sufficient progress in using assessment information systematically to build on

what pupils already know. The main gains are in providing better matched work for higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs in some classes. However, there is not yet consistency in the use of the system for continuously monitoring the achievements of all pupils to identify at what level they are working and how their progress can be accelerated. Various methods are being trialled for providing pupils with targets to help them understand how they can improve their progress and no system is yet securely in place. Senior leaders are not analysing pupils' progress data on a sufficiently regular basis to ensure that the school's work continually enables all groups to achieve as much as they can. The benefits of doing this are demonstrated in the school's recent in-depth analysis of pupils' writing outcomes which has led to a clear plan for providing tailored support to underachieving pupils and for improving the overall teaching of the subject. This approach is not yet applied systematically enough for a sustained raising of standards in English, mathematics and science.

Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved the accuracy of their assessments and the use of assessment information in planning, however this is at an early stage of development.

The school is steadily building on its previous good progress in improving the quality of the curriculum. Well-planned cross curricular topics with a good emphasis on practical and problem solving activities increase pupils' enthusiasm for learning. These topics make a positive contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to their skills in using information and communications technology for independent research and presenting information. Pupils' interest in learning is enhanced by stimulating displays and role-play areas, and a good programme of educational visits.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to a good or better level and ensure rigour, pace and challenge in all lessons – satisfactory.
- Use assessment information systematically to build on what pupils already know – inadequate.
- Provide an exciting, relevant curriculum which always motivates pupils to learn – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to give strong leadership and guidance for improving the school. She works in effective partnership with the local authority and they have agreed appropriate changes to their joint plan which take account of what has been achieved so far and new priorities. The headteacher is increasingly well supported by the deputy headteacher who is making a strong contribution to the leadership of improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Other senior leaders continue to develop their roles effectively. They are increasing their contribution to the school's performance management arrangements and they are at the forefront in raising the quality of teaching. The senior leadership team as a whole are taking more responsibility for evaluating the quality of teaching across the school and providing feedback to help colleagues to improve. While the evaluation is broadly accurate, it is not yet focused sufficiently on pupils' outcomes nor on assuring consistency in the use of assessment and target-setting methods. This inconsistency is due to enthusiastic teachers trying different methods rather than a lack of support for the leadership team. The staff's morale is good and they work hard with leaders to improve the school.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement in teaching and learning, and they are aware of the need for further improvement in assessment. The development of middle leaders' roles is slow because of staffing instability and this means that some senior leaders have too many responsibilities.

The school is improving its partnership with parents. Informative curriculum workshops are provided and attendance is increasing. It is now less difficult to find parents willing to be members of the governing body.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Strengthen senior management and ensure that all leaders carry out rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning to tackle underachievement – satisfactory.

#### External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support and to engage senior leaders and governors in evaluating the school's progress. Local authority reports on the school's progress show an accurate understanding of strengths and priorities for improvement. They recognize the growing capacity of school leaders to evaluate the quality of provision and bring about necessary improvement therefore they are reducing external intervention accordingly. Their support is now focused and having a positive impact on a small number of areas agreed in collaboration with the school, for example improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and developing writing across the curriculum.

#### Priorities for further improvement

To raise standards and improve progress the senior leadership team and staff should:

- Establish consistent use of a clear, manageable system for assessing pupils' achievement on a regular basis
- Use assessment information in a consistent way to plan work that will help all groups of pupils to accelerate their progress

- Establish consistent use of a manageable system for setting targets that will make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work
- Systematically and frequently analyse pupils' progress data, in partnership with governors, to inform school self-evaluation and improvement planning.

To improve attendance senior leaders and the learning mentor should:

- Analyse data and other information on absence to identify the range of different needs of pupils whose attendance is below average
- Draw on a wider and more imaginative menu of approaches to reducing absence, including guidance and incentive, in order to respond more effectively to pupils' differing needs.