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Mrs Proctor
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Procter

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Tupton Primary School

Following my visit with Chris Moodie, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14-15 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 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 Strategic Director for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Tupton Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 14-15 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, a group of governors, subject co-ordinators and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous visit the headteacher has resigned. An acting headteacher has been seconded in who took up her post from 1 September and will stay until the end of December. A member of the senior leadership team, who was also the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO), resigned from her leadership roles but has continued as a classroom teacher. A member of staff, funded by the local authority, has taken on the role of SENCO. The senior leadership team now comprises the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and early years co-ordinator. The Year 1 teacher was absent due to illness.

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

The provisional Year 6 test results for 2009 showed an improvement compared to 2008 results especially in mathematics. There was also an improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining the above average level 5 in reading, mathematics and science. Pupils' attainment in writing is a cause for concern. Only one pupil achieved Level 5 in writing in the Year 6 tests. Current assessment data indicates that pupils would need to make exceptional progress to meet their end of year writing target which are very modest in expectation.

The end of Early Years Foundation Stage assessments undertaken at the end of the summer term showed, for that cohort, children were working at above age related expectations.

Pupils' levels of attainment, as seen in lesson observations, across Key Stage 1 and 2 are generally low but are improving especially in Years 5 and 6. A new system for tracking pupils' progress has been implemented since September. Assessments have been moderated and there is now a level of confidence that data is accurate. An analysis of assessments done in September indicate that 75% of pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain level 4 or above in English and 82% in mathematics which is higher than the schools published targets. However, the schools 2010 targets for English and mathematics reflect low expectations. The analysis of assessment data does not include a breakdown of how well boys and girls do which is an omission.

Progress since the last inspection the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6, by ensuring that assessment information is used in teaching to challenge all pupils at the right level – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

During the visit pupils' behaviour was satisfactory. Pupils are often polite and helpful towards each other. However, some pupils are often happy to do just enough and do not approach work with a sense of wanting to always do their best. In some classes teachers promote good learning behaviour by keeping the pace of lessons brisk and reminding pupils when work is not good enough or not enough has been completed. However, in a number of lessons observed pupils were allowed to waste time or work slowly.

Attendance continues to be in line with national figures.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching was satisfactory in most of the lessons observed. Inadequate teaching was observed in one lesson. Good teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6. In the good lessons, the teaching was lively and pupils were interested and enthusiastic. Learning occurred at pace and pupils were focused and tried hard. When teaching was satisfactory, pupils spent too much time listening and struggled to maintain their concentration. The expectations of pupils was too low and the pace and quantity of their work was less than would be expected.

The school's new special educational needs coordinator has reviewed how teaching assistants are used and they are now providing effective support for pupils who need additional help. Improved assessment of this group of pupils has been successful in identifying their needs but there is currently limited evidence of impact.

Teachers are more focused on providing work that is matched to the differing needs of the pupils in English and mathematics lessons. However, in many other lessons work is still too general and teachers are not making clear what they expect from pupils of different abilities. In all subjects more able pupils are not always provided with activities which will extend their learning. The expectations that some teachers have of these pupils remains too low, and opportunities for independent learning are missed. In contrast, pupils in a small number of lessons are provided with work that matches their needs well. Good progress was made in these lessons and pupils enjoyed their learning. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed lessons where they were active and found things out for themselves, adding that this did not happen often enough and this meant that some lessons do not motivate them.

Teachers' planning is inconsistent in its approach to meeting the differing needs of pupils. For example, planning for all subjects in Year 5, effectively identifies how teaching will match the differing abilities of pupils. In other year groups, planning in literacy and numeracy is detailed but this is not the case for the other subjects.

The use of personal learning targets in lessons has become more consistent, and most pupils have a broad understanding about their own target. Too often, however, the work that pupils are asked to do is not linked clearly to their target, and they are expected to work through targets that they have already achieved. This means that more able pupils spend too much time revisiting skills and learning. Pupils consistently receive a good quality of feedback in their books. Teachers have invested in time and thought and mark books with care, guiding pupils to further improvement.

Pupils raised concerns about the balance of curriculum areas covered in a week. Inspectors noted that time-tables did not give enough time for curriculum areas such as religious education and music.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Provide pupils, particularly the more able, with more opportunities to work independently and give consistent high quality support for those who need additional help – satisfactory
- Ensure that all teachers set challenging targets and give pupils clear guidance as to how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher has lifted the morale of staff who now feel more confident that progress is being made. She has made herself known to parents who speak very positively about how the children are enjoying school more.

The acting headteacher has attempted to use and supplement the improvement plans written following the school's inspection in December 2008. Using the areas identified for action she has written further more specific action plans to address weaknesses, for example, in leadership and management. Each action plan is clear and sets out helpful work to do. However, multiple action plans has led to over complication and a lack of clarity about what needs to be done on a weekly basis.

The senior leadership team are focused on improving the school and meet regularly. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have more whole school roles in dealing with improvement. The proven effective leadership skills of the early years co-ordinator are not being used to full potential.

The deputy headteacher continues to play an important role in improving the school. She has led, for example, the work on analysing the assessments of pupils' progress which has provided some informative insights. She has produced a useful action plan to improve provision for gifted and talented pupils. The role of subject co-ordinator is having limited impact. Although there has been a significant amount of support from local authority staff this has not led to subject co-ordinators initiating or leading improvement. The lack of proven capacity at middle management level is not allowing the school to take greater control of the improvement work that is needed.

A number of lesson observations have been undertaken by the acting headteacher and helpful pointers for improvements have been identified. At other levels leaders and managers have not been involved in observing lessons which has limited the impact they can have on the quality of teaching.

Sensible plans are in place to use the new assessment tracking system as a tool to identify the effectiveness of teaching. The acting headteacher has very clear intentions to meet with individual teachers and discuss the progress pupils are making. The planned use of assessment data will go some way to meet a priority identified at the time of the last visit when leaders were asked to ensure measurable targets were set for pupils' progress so that teachers could be held to account.

Robust monitoring of the progress the school is making against the key issues has continued by the four governors who lead on this work. There was some disappointment that a new permanent headteacher was not appointed to start in January but this reflects the governors determination to appoint a highly skilled leader. They appreciate the work of the acting headteacher but have not made explicit their expectations of what should have been achieved by the end of December. Governors are aware of the need to appoint a permanent headteacher as soon as possible to ensure that the leadership of the school keeps the momentum of change.

Records kept on staff to meet safeguarding regulations are in place.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Make sure that leaders at all levels monitor the school's work rigorously and hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make in their class – satisfactory.

External support

The support the local authority is providing is satisfactory. The local authority has been very effective in ensuring the school has an acting headteacher. The range of support given to the school is good. However, the high number advisory staff

supporting the school, for example three advisers for literacy, has meant staff have had to absorb advice from many sources. The local authority rightly recognise that the school continues to need a high level of support but there is now a need to ensure that the impact of this support is demonstrated in the increased capacity of leaders at all levels.

Priorities for further improvement

- Produce a clear succinct improvement plan that identifies how the school will tackle any remaining weaknesses linked to the four key issues given to the school at the December 2008 inspection. Ensure that the plan identifies when improvement activity will take place.
- Improve lesson planning for all subjects making sure that it highlights expectations for pupils of different abilities.
- Improve the curriculum balance of weekly timetables.