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19 October 2009

Mr Mark Gallacher
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gallacher

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Morton Trentside Primary School

Following my visit with David Curtis, additional inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 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 third 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Children's Services for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely
Ian Nelson
Additional Inspector

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, and two parent governors. They observed all classes in lessons, talked with pupils during lessons and playtimes and analysed the school's assessment information. The inspectors conducted two lesson observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Context

The interim headteacher is still in post. The substantive headteacher has resigned and the governors are advertising for a permanent replacement. Three teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. One teacher returned from maternity leave and two new ones have been appointed. Budget constraints have meant halving the number of teaching assistants in the school. The local authority has maintained the presence of one extra governor on the governing body while the second one has been relocated elsewhere. The school has a different school improvement partner.

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

Pupils' progress continues to improve. The unvalidated results of the latest national tests at Year 6 show that pupils attained broadly average standards and made satisfactory progress overall from their starting points. The school is setting challenging targets to build on its current successes. Achieving these targets for Year 6 in 2010 would result in a rise in standards overall and indicate accelerating progress to make up for past underachievement. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils are on track to attain these targets. Rigorous analysis of assessment results by senior staff has enabled the school to identify precisely where extra support is needed to help pupils to achieve what they are capable of. For example, the school has provided an after-school club for a small group of pupils identified as not on track to reach their targets. The school also has plans for booster sessions for more able pupils capable of reaching the higher Level 5 in national tests by the end of Year 6. Such detailed analysis of pupils' progress and effective strategies to provide extra support for targeted groups have been crucial in tackling underachievement and establishing the good progress seen in lessons currently.

The school's assessment records show that pupils are making good progress year by year to make up for past underachievement. There is little evidence of different rates of progress by different groups. Girls' underachievement has been eradicated. The last visit judged that this issue had been resolved and the evidence from this

one confirms that position. This will not therefore feature as a focus of future monitoring visits. Pupils continue to do a bit better in English than in mathematics but the gap is closing. The school has identified a need to improve pupils' handwriting, spelling and grammar, what staff refer to as their secretarial skills. Pupils also struggle at times with spellings of subject-specific vocabulary, particularly in science.

The differences in the pupils' progress between lower and upper Key Stage 2 identified at the last visit have been eradicated. This means that pupils are currently making good progress consistently from Reception through to Year 6. There is more evidence now of teachers planning work to meet the different ability levels within their classes so that all pupils are appropriately challenged. Lesson observations and discussions with pupils indicate that they enjoy learning and have positive attitudes to school.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour continues to be good. They listen to adults and to each other and settle quickly to work. The playground and dinner hall are harmonious places where pupils get on well with each other and play happily, safely and energetically together. On one or two occasions, their enthusiasm gets the better of them and spills over into calling out in lessons or, among the youngest, rushing around the classroom, but staff are vigilant to such issues and regularly remind them of the expected behaviour. There is plenty of energetic play at break times and the lack of playground bumps and bruises indicates that pupils have a good regard to the needs of others and play safely. The good progress pupils are now making in English and mathematics along with their excellent social and moral development equip them well for the next stage of their schooling.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching and learning are consistently good. All the lessons seen during the inspection were at least good with one judged outstanding. This is a marked improvement since the last visit. The recruitment of two experienced teachers and return of another from maternity leave have strengthened teaching considerably. Teachers know their pupils well and have an excellent rapport with them. They

regularly reinforce their expectations of behaviour so that little time is wasted in lessons establishing or maintaining discipline. Teaching often includes practical activities to excite and motivate pupils. For example, in a design and technology lesson pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning to join pieces of paper to make moving parts, as seen in pop-up books, in anticipation of putting these techniques together later in the term in model making. In another lesson, excellent partnership working helped to reinforce the school's teaching of being healthy and safe as a nurse got pupils to put their hands into a special machine to show whether they had washed their hands thoroughly enough to get rid of all the germs. In mathematics, work is planned to match the ability of different groups in the class, as when pupils in Key Stage 1 worked on matching pairs of numbers to make either ten or twenty. The ones who needed most help were supported very effectively by a teaching assistant and used coins to count with, while the most able matched number pairs to twenty, largely independently.

Regular assessment now enables staff to plot how well pupils are doing term by term and to address potential underachievement early. As a result there is little evidence of any differences in the progress made by different groups of pupils or in different subjects. The good progress being made in mathematics is helping to redress previous underachievement.

Children in the Reception class have a good range of appropriate activities both indoors and out. Even though they have not been in school very long they have quickly gained confidence in choosing activities and getting on independently while the teacher works more intensively with a group at a time. As a consequence they have settled quickly into school routines and share equipment sensibly and sensitively.

Teaching makes effective use of adult support within the classroom but occasionally teaching assistants are not deployed to best effect. On occasions sessions could have benefited from the support of a teaching assistant while on others the extra adult had little to do for part of the lesson. As there are now half as many teaching assistants the school is reviewing how best to deploy them.

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 – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Effective leadership and management by the interim headteacher has been the main factor in the school's improvement since the last inspection. Staff, pupils and parents

are full of praise for what he has achieved since taking over the school. Governors are intent on recruiting a new substantive headteacher as early as they can to build on the school's improvements and take it to the next level.

New and returning staff have been inducted effectively into school systems and routines with a result that there is a very cohesive and effective staff team. Management responsibilities have been carefully allocated with a sensible and sensitive timeline set to enable staff to fit into new roles. The deputy headteacher continues to grow in management experience. The governors speak highly of the way he presents assessment information to them in an accessible way so that they can understand precisely how well the school is doing. The governing body still has vacancies but is to be restructured to create a smaller body. The aim is to harness the enthusiasm of existing governors who are highly committed to the school, growing in confidence and getting the right balance between supporting and challenging staff.

Teaching has improved and is now consistently good with none that is weak. The analysis of assessment information is highly effective in helping staff identify where pupils may be in danger of falling behind. Regular, rigorous checking of teaching ensures that the senior leaders have a secure grasp of strengths and areas for development in provision. There is a common vision and determination among staff and governors to make things better for pupils and to ensure that having eradicated underachievement the school continues to improve. There is no complacency and there is a genuine desire and commitment to move the school onwards and upwards for the good of the pupils.

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 – good

External support

The local authority has maintained one extra governor on the governing body whose support and input is much appreciated by other governors. A new school improvement partner is proving very supportive and helpful and the school is benefiting from the support of local authority consultants through the improving school programme. The local authority has recognised the good leadership being provided by the interim headteacher and has tailored external support to complement that good leadership.

Priorities for further improvement

- Given the school's good progress since the last visit the most important priority is for governors to try to appoint a substantive headteacher to build upon that good progress.