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15 October 2009

Mr Richard Stone
Fosse Primary School
Balfour Street
Leicester
LE3 5EA

Dear Mr Stone,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fosse Primary School

Following my visit with David Speakman and Patricia Davies, Additional Inspectors, to your school on Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 October, 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 fourth 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.

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 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior management team, a group of teaching assistants and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the third monitoring visit five teachers have left the school. Three new full-time teachers and one part-time teacher took up their posts at the school in September 2009. In addition one substantive teacher has returned from a period of long-term sick leave and another has returned from secondment. Internal appointments have been made, promoting three teachers to posts as phase leaders and forming the senior management team. An internal appointment of inclusion manager has been made; this appointment completes the senior leadership team. A new school improvement advisor from the LA has been appointed.

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

Achievement has improved since the last monitoring visit, although the progress pupils make in their learning remains too variable.

The school's assessment data show that there are still inconsistencies in progress between and within year groups. Although many pupils make satisfactory or better progress, a significant minority continue to underachieve. In the school's latest assessments, pupils made better progress in writing than in mathematics and reading.

The progress seen in lessons and pupils' work remains uneven. In most lessons pupils enjoy their learning and make at least satisfactory progress. However, there are still not enough lessons where pupils learn quickly enough to overcome their underachievement from the past. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning to speak English make similar progress to their peers. While the school has improved the attendance of the large majority of pupils who were persistently absent, this success has not yet had an impact on the achievement of this small group. Consequently, these pupils continue to underachieve.

Test results for Year 6 pupils in the summer term were an improvement on those of recent years, and were close to national averages. Attainment in writing was particularly good at the higher level 5. However, fewer pupils managed to attain this higher level in mathematics and science.



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are willing and ready learners and these qualities contribute much to their progress during lessons, even when there are shortcomings in teaching. Their interest and attention allow them to carry over knowledge and understanding from one day to the next, for example, and apply it to new situations. On the few occasions when the teaching fails to engage the pupils fully, they quickly become restless and distracted. Consequently, learning is limited in these lessons.

The effectiveness of provision

Since the last monitoring visit, the quality of teaching has improved. There are now far fewer lessons where teaching is inadequate, but there is still not enough teaching which is good enough to enable pupils to learn at a quick enough pace. In the most effective lessons, planning takes good account of pupils' prior learning and activities are based securely on what pupils already know and understand. Consequently, pupils are challenged in their learning and make good progress. Activities are introduced in a clear and exciting way, often making good use of an interactive whiteboard to engage pupils' attention and encourage an enthusiastic approach to learning. In these lessons, questioning is frequently used well. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson on instructional writing, the teacher used questioning to encourage pupils to contribute important and relevant facts, enabling them to lead the lesson and be responsible for their own learning. The pace of learning was brisk and pupils confidently worked their way through the challenging tasks.

Where learning is less effective, lesson planning fails to provide a sufficient level of challenge for the full range of ability. Teachers have assessment information available for all pupils, giving them a secure idea about the levels each individual has reached. However, they do not always use this information well enough in planning learning activities. Too often, teachers plan the same activity for all pupils, regardless of ability. They depend on the level of support provided or the quantity of work to be completed rather than matching the level of work to pupils' individual learning needs. In this way those pupils who are capable of doing harder work are not sufficiently challenged whilst some find the tasks too difficult. As a result, too many pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of. On occasions, teachers miss opportunities to plan more complex activities to challenge pupils. For example, not enough activities are provided where pupils can consolidate and practise their numeracy skills by applying them in problem-solving situations.

A strength of the teaching seen throughout the school is the strong focus on developing pupils' specialist vocabulary. For example, in two lessons observed, there was a clear emphasis on using the correct terminology for describing shapes in mathematics. This helps teachers to meet the learning needs of pupils at an early



stage of learning English or those who do not have a wide range of vocabulary. In science, displays are used effectively to give a visual presentation of important vocabulary and make the meaning of key words very clear.

The school has introduced an appropriate marking policy. However, the effectiveness of marking in helping pupils to learn is inconsistent. There is some good marking in English, which is clear in indicating the next steps pupils should take and how to improve their work. In science this is less evident. Work is marked regularly and teachers write questions in pupils' books, aimed at improving work and helping pupils rectify mistakes. On the whole, pupils respond to these questions well.

The science curriculum is now becoming embedded in the work of the school. Scientific investigation is planned into each topic so pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop scientific exploration skills including planning experiments, predicting outcomes, carrying out investigations and recording their findings. Science assessment, however, is under-developed. The assessment system adopted by the school does not focus sufficiently sharply on small steps in pupils' learning. Consequently, it is difficult to assess each pupil's learning accurately and then plan appropriate next steps.

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.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has continued to develop its procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its work. Consequently, the leadership team and interim executive board (IEB) have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Judgements made by the school's leaders about the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils are accurate. The headteacher's ability to assess the quality of a lesson and identify appropriate areas for improvement was clearly demonstrated in three joint lesson observations with the lead inspector. The school's leaders are in no doubt that the main obstacle to improving pupils' achievement is the quality of teaching. There is a clear shortage of teaching which is good enough to accelerate pupils' learning. This means that pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of and the teaching does not help them plug the gaps in their learning.

The school has prepared a development plan for the current term. This plan takes good account of the school's knowledge about itself as well as having clear links to the improvement areas identified during the Ofsted inspection in April 2008. It contains appropriate and clear actions to address the areas of weakness and these



are linked to timed success criteria. The school has put in place a suitable schedule of monitoring and evaluation activities. This programme involves all senior leaders, making effective use of their expertise and providing a good opportunity for their further professional development. Activities are documented well, although the written reports are not sufficiently evaluative to identify accurately the impact of the work of the school. For example, lesson observation reports provide detail about strengths and weaknesses, but include too few references to pupils' learning. Insufficient attention has been paid to the monitoring of pupils' work. The one report seen for a scrutiny of English work is too heavily focused on what teachers have done, rather than on the effectiveness of their work in enabling pupils to learn.

The three recently appointed phase leaders have a good understanding of their role to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment throughout the school. They have been provided with a good level of support from the LA. For example, they have participated in joint lesson observations with the school improvement advisor. As a result, they are now beginning to make a contribution to improving the quality of teaching. However, their very recent appointment means that the impact of their work on improving the progress pupils make remains limited.

Teaching assistants are now beginning to make a more effective contribution to pupils' learning. This is the result of the clear direction they have been given through training and the implementation of a school policy covering their work. Consequently, teaching assistants feel that their role has been enhanced and they have an improved understanding about the importance of their contribution.

The school's system to track the progress pupils make is now becoming embedded in the culture of the school. All teachers are provided with details of the progress of every pupil in the school. There is careful analysis of the learning of different groups of pupils and these data are used to ensure that appropriate support is put in place for those pupils that need it. The information is also used to hold teachers to account. Consequently, this raises their expectations of what each pupil can achieve.

The IEB has continued to meet each month. These meetings are clearly focused on school improvement. Minutes of meetings indicate that discussions are robust and that the IEB is providing a constant source of challenge and support to the headteacher. The introduction of visits to the school by IEB members is contributing to the information they have about the school from direct experience.

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 – satisfactory.



External support

The LA has rightly adjusted the support it is providing for the school. There is no longer an associate headteacher in place, although the headteacher is supported by an experienced headteacher coach. The newly established team of senior managers is receiving considerable training and support. For example, they have benefited from carrying out joint lesson observations with the school improvement advisor. The IEB is continuing to provide a good level of support and challenge for the school.