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08 March 2010

Mrs M Binns, Executive Headteacher and
Ms J Hobley, Acting Headteacher
Bankwood Community Primary School
Bankwood Close
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S14 1LW

Dear Mrs Binns and Ms Hobley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bankwood Community Primary School

Following my visit with Rachael Flesher, HMI, and Judy Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 03 and 04 March 2010, 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 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 – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to agreement with the Lead Inspector.

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 Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Bankwood Community Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 03 and 04 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The school's context has remained broadly stable. The Year 6 teacher took up a new post in another school in February, but the school has made sure that this class has had the least possible discontinuity in its teaching. An experienced learning mentor joined the senior leadership team in January to lead on improving attendance. Children who joined the Reception class in January have been taught by an additional specialist teacher who had begun her preparatory work before their arrival.

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

Observation across the age range confirms the school's assessments. They show that steady improvement has been sustained during this school year. Pupils' work shows they have moved forwards in English and mathematics, although some age groups have made faster progress than others. Progress is as positive for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Observations indicate that the progress of pupils attaining slightly below average was in some lessons less strong than in others, because they were less clear about what was expected. While the statutory targets are unlikely to be met this year, the school's realistically challenging predictions for Year 6 are within reach. This would consolidate the improved achievement seen last year.

Pupils say they feel they are making progress and, across the age range, enjoy learning. Standards are still below average in the younger age groups, most markedly in writing, but because of the steady improvement in progress, standards are rising. Children who started the Reception Year in September are making brisker progress compared with the previous visit as provision is better matched to their needs. Even so, the development of communication, language and literacy remains relatively weak. In Key Stage 1, gains in independent writing are plain to see in pupils' work and they talk with more confidence than previously about solving mathematical problems.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English and mathematics – satisfactory.



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Following the dip noted in the previous visit, attendance has recently improved by 1.2%. The number of persistent absentees has fallen slightly and levels of attendance are slightly higher than this time last year. A leading learning mentor, temporarily appointed, has rapidly ensured very thorough analysis of absences and effective cooperation with local services to follow up problems. The school keeps in close touch with parents and carers and operates a sequence of progressively more formal responses to poor attendance and punctuality. As a result, attendance now stands at 91.4%. This was achieved despite the snowy period in January, throughout which the school remained open. Although attendance remains low compared with the national rate, and below target, the early impact of the steps taken recently suggests a suitably strengthened capacity to overcome significant obstacles. Much will depend on how well these improvements are consolidated by the school's team of permanent staff.

Pupils like their school and are mostly keen to learn. Our small interview group showed enthusiasm for English and still more for mathematics. A range of pupils enjoy the wider opportunities the school offers, including street dancing, music making, visits, art events and sports. Pupils spoken to say they feel safe in school, although a few complained of unkind behaviour. Incidents have been dealt with firmly, including, on occasions, by fixed-term exclusion. Observed playtimes showed pupils enjoying playing games together energetically and they are safely managed. Relationships with adults are good. Because adults provide strong role models, pupils learn to be polite from an early age. The school recognises, however, that there is further scope to encourage better interpersonal and social skills.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Improvements in the quality of teaching have continued. The school's evaluation of teaching corresponds with inspectors'. No unsatisfactory teaching was evident and good features were seen more consistently than previously. Despite unavoidable discontinuity due to the departure of their teacher, pupils in Year 6 have stayed on course to meet their targets because they are taught by a coordinated team of experienced teachers including the school's acting headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Leaders at all levels use assessment and monitoring well to spot where learning needs to improve. They provide guidance and support tailored to different age groups and have enabled staff to work together to refine their teaching. As a result, teachers show better confidence in making assessments and using strategies which



challenge the range of pupils in their classes. Their expectations are suitably high and they make more effective use of activities which promote independence. Some are adept at meeting the needs of all pupils in the class, as was seen in a Year 3 lesson. This, however, is not a consistent feature. In the satisfactory lessons seen, some pupils found their work too hard, while others found theirs rather easy. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan relevant and stimulating activities, although adults do not always spot opportunities to boost individual children's progress. Marking and feedback have improved in usefulness recently, as a result of specific guidance and focused monitoring. In Year 2, for example, marking clearly helps pupils understand their next step. Sharp use of individual targets and feedback is not, however, as consistently evident in Years 5 and 6.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that teaching consistently promotes high standards and meets the learning needs of all pupils – satisfactory.
- Place greater emphasis on independent learning and the development of teachers' range of strategies to challenge pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

As the senior leadership team has become better established, responsibilities are better shared and this is helping to drive improvement. For example, the leader of mathematics has clear sight of pupils' progress in the subject and has helped to plan professional development for staff. The leading learning mentor has coordinated the response to absenteeism, with swift impact. The Early Years Foundation Stage now has its own leader who has supported the development of staff and improved communication with the children's centre. Monitoring is thorough and makes a positive contribution to the quality of provision. The acting headteacher evaluates sharply and leads with insight and determination. The longer-term plan for leading the school is taking shape. The shadow governing body, too, is increasingly sharing responsibility with the interim executive body. Mentored induction is provided for new members, including parents and carers. Key policies, for example for safeguarding pupils, are kept under review. Although the school needs and receives the support of its learning partner school and the local authority, it has coped with recent challenges more independently. Its improvement plan is on track and suitable levels of performance are within reach, although statutory targets may not be. Despite continuing setbacks, such as changes of staffing, the school has sustained its forward momentum. If it can keep moving, it will be well placed to demonstrate significant improvement when next inspected.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Secure sustainable and effective leadership – satisfactory.
- Further develop the roles of leaders at all levels, with wider distribution of responsibilities – good.



External support

The local authority continues to provide support through the interim executive board. The frequency of its meetings has reduced appropriately. Meanwhile, regular reviews have helped the school keep track of the improvement plan and provided rigorous evaluation. Valuable practical help from the local authority also includes additional support for teaching, assessment and inclusion. The learning partnership with Norfolk School has provided further assistance with filling a vacancy and sharing expertise, and is expected to continue.

Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities for improvement remain the same.