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12 March 2010

Ms Anne Skelton
Headteacher
Dearne Goldthorpe Primary School
Barnsley Road
Goldthorpe
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Skelton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Dearne Goldthorpe Primary School

Following my visit with Fiona Gowers and Rosemary Eaton, additional inspectors, to your school on 10–11 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 fourth 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

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 first monitoring inspection on 10–11 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents and pupils' books. They also met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of Governors, the School Improvement Partner and groups of pupils.

Context

There has been considerable long-term staff absence since the school was made subject to special measures and this has still not been resolved. A third of the teachers are on temporary contracts and this adversely affects the school's attempts to consolidate improvement. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the school has been included in the national World Class Primary Schools Programme in order to improve their low standards in English and mathematics.

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

Pupils' progress and standards are improving. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in most classes and good progress in the final two years of Key Stage 2. This represents an improving trend. However, it has not yet been enough to raise standards significantly at the end of Key Stage 2. School data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that, while improving, standards are still low. They are improving rapidly in English and this is largely due to the very effective teaching of writing. The rate of improvement in mathematics' attainment is much slower.

In classes where progress is satisfactory, work is often pitched at too low a level to enable middle and higher attaining pupils to accelerate their progress. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress when receiving well planned programmes of support in small groups. When these pupils work alongside their peers in lessons, however, their progress is not as good as it could be because the work is not always suitably adapted to meet their needs.

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

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work have improved considerably during the past year. There is more independent and collaborative learning in lessons and this is contributing to pupils' improving progress. Attendance has improved considerably since the previous visit and has been above average for the last four weeks. This is due largely to a reward scheme that has captured the enthusiasm of the pupils for making sure that there is no unnecessary absence. Parents are also making a greater contribution to improving attendance; consequently, the school needs to contact them much less frequently about their children's absence.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching, including the use of assessment, is improving.. Around half of the teaching is good or better and none is inadequate. The strongest teaching is in Key Stage 2, particularly in the upper years where expectations are high, the pace of learning is good and pupils are enthused by stimulating activities. In Key Stage 1 there is some good teaching but it is not consistent and the pace of improvement is hampered by instability in staffing. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve. Children make good progress in adult-led activities, such as phonic skills, which have been carefully adjusted to meet the range of learning needs. Children make less progress in the activities they choose for themselves because the emphasis in planning is more on doing the tasks than learning something from them.

School leaders have considerably improved the use of assessment since the previous visit. All teachers now have clear information about the progress of their pupils and this is helping them to plan lessons that are better matched to the learning needs of all groups. They are becoming increasingly confident in their own assessment of what pupils can do, especially in writing, and they rely less on formal tests. They have established a consistent and manageable approach to translating progress data into detailed targets for each pupil. As a result, pupils are using very clear guidelines for improving their standards in their day-to-day work. In one very effective lesson, pupils used their targets as a basis for selecting tasks from a range of options and this ensured that they were all working at the correct level of challenge. Targets are not yet sufficiently personalised for the small minority of pupils with significant special educational needs. When marking work, teachers provide pupils with useful guidance on the next steps needed to improve their progress. In the most effective lessons, pupils improve their understanding by assessing their own work and that of their peers.



The curriculum continues to improve. The planning of cross-curricular topics has improved with a much sharper focus on what pupils will learn as well as what they will do. Planning does not yet fully ensure that pupils can make good progress in learning new skills in science. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the lessons where they are involved in interesting practical activities. They are particularly enjoying a design and technology project in which they work to a budget to make toys that they will later sell for a profit. In doing this, they are learning skills that make a good contribution to their future economic well-being. Work outside school is more limited. When a senior leader recently sought pupils' views about the curriculum, they responded that they did not go on enough trips to places of interest. Inspectors agree with them, because there is too little opportunity to gain rich first-hand experiences linked to what is being learned in school. In some classes, there are good examples of interesting topic work being used as a basis for developing writing and computer skills, but this is not yet consistent across the school.

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 – good.
- Provide an exciting, relevant curriculum which always motivates pupils to learn – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are improving and are giving the school an increased capacity to raise standards further. The headteacher provides a strong drive for raising standards. The senior leadership team gives the headteacher effective support in introducing new methods and monitoring their impact. Senior leaders are confident in their roles and take initiative where they see that improvement is required. They make accurate judgements of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and provide constructive feedback to help colleagues to improve. Recent monitoring of the whole curriculum and of additional support programmes provided very useful information about their impact on pupils' motivation and progress, and this has resulted in good plans for improvement. Senior leaders discuss the progress data for all pupils with teachers to ensure that everything is being done to raise standards. These discussions do not take place sufficiently frequently to ensure timely changes in provision for any pupils whose progress may be stalling.

Subject leaders are now starting to develop their role and they have clear timetables for gathering evidence about the quality of provision and pupils' progress across the school. Governance is strong under the committed leadership of the Chair. He is closely involved in the local authority arrangements for keeping the school under review and this contributes to his very clear understanding of the strengths and



priorities for improvement. He ensures that the governing body are developing their skills in providing effective challenge and support as required. The school has arrangements in place to ensure that the required checks are carried out for all adults who work with the pupils. The school's outdoor area is not a safe environment for the pupils. Staff strive to reduce risk as much as possible through close supervision and guidance, but it is still too easy for pupils to gain access to a busy road and to a derelict area that is strewn with dangerous rubbish.

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 effectively monitors the progress of the school and provides useful guidance, support and challenge. External involvement has increased since the school was included in the World Class Primary Schools Programme. The alignment of this programme with the school's plan for the removal of special measures ensures that the school is not tackling too many priorities at the same time. School leaders have key responsibilities in the implementation of the programme; therefore, they are continuing to build their capacity for sustaining improvements without external support.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure action is taken to improve the safety of the school's outdoor environment.