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Mrs Mandy Pickles  
Acting Headteacher  
Ackton Pastures Primary School  
College Grove  
Whitwood  
Castleford  
WF10 5NS

Dear Mrs Pickles

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ackton Pastures Primary School

Following my visit with Naila Zaffar, additional inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 February 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed at the approval of 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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Ackton Pastures Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3 – 4 February 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

The substantive headteacher at the time of the previous inspection has been absent since November 2009, due to ill health. A temporary headteacher was appointed in December 2009 until the end of the autumn term. The current acting headteacher commenced at the beginning of the spring term and will continue in post until July 2010. Given the changes in leadership since the school was deemed to require special measures, action to address the areas for improvement only commenced four weeks prior to this monitoring visit. The lack of progress referred to in this letter does not reflect the current leadership and management of the school, nor does it represent the willingness and commitment of the staff to take the school forward.

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

Achievement is inadequate. Attainment is low and progress made by pupils in both key stages is inadequate. This has been the case since 2005. End of Year 2 assessments in 2009 show that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics was well below average. Attainment in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 is also well below the national average. The school leadership acknowledges this and accepts that substantial improvement is required in order to address the legacy of underachievement for many pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress and raise the standards in English, mathematics and science in both key stages – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Many do not enjoy their learning because activities are not always appropriate in relation to their abilities. As a result pupils become restless, lose concentration and go off task. This inhibits their progress. Pupils are often supported by teaching assistants but this work is not sufficiently well



planned and monitored throughout the school. In spite of weaknesses in teaching and learning, the behaviour of pupils is satisfactory.

#### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching observed during this monitoring visit was variable as it was at the time of the previous inspection. In the good lessons observed, teaching is stimulating and engages pupils in their learning. Teachers have clear expectations in relation to what it is that pupils are to do and learn. In these lessons questioning is good and this enables pupils to think prior to articulating a response, thereby enhancing understanding. The relationships are good between teachers and pupils.

Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report still remain. In many lessons planning does not reflect the learning needs of individuals and groups sufficiently well. Assessment is not used well to gauge the progress of pupils during lessons or to use this information to plan future work. As a result activities are not well matched to pupils learning needs. Not all teaching assistants are used efficiently. In some cases, too much time is spent watching and listening to the teacher instead of actively supporting individuals or groups of pupils. The direction given by teachers to teaching assistants lacks purpose and the work is not monitored effectively in order to determine the impact they are making on pupils' progress. Systems to track pupils' progress are beginning to emerge, but this is not in place for all year groups. At present there is insufficient data to highlight the underachievement of groups of pupils or for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The identification of pupils through the accurate use of teacher assessment, combined with the analysis of data, leading to targeted, quality and monitored intervention remains a major weakness. The more able pupils are not always challenged and expectations of what pupils should do and attain by the end of the year are too low.

Marking in some case is evaluative and does make reference to how pupils can improve, but the quality is variable. The presentation of work by pupils is poor. The displays around the school are good and provide a good opportunity to celebrate achievement and raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The quality of classroom displays is a different story. They tend to be instructional with very little pupils' work shown.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress and raise the standards in English, mathematics and science in both key stages by:
  - improving the quality of teaching
  - developing assessment procedures – inadequate.

#### The effectiveness of leadership and management



The current acting headteacher has only been in post for a very short time. She is developing a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing all the areas for improvement. A clear vision and sense of purpose is evident at senior management level, with the emphasis on raising attainment and enhancing progress through good teaching. There is much to do and senior leaders are aware of this. However staff, to their credit, are positive and demonstrate a willingness to get behind the leadership in driving and realising improvement.

A draft school improvement plan has been produced. It is a working document: it is constantly being amended as new deficiencies in relation to teaching and learning become apparent. Evaluation at senior management level is becoming more rigorous and this is beginning to drive improvement. However, overall, the quality of school evaluation is improving, although it is yet to impact on pupils' progress.

The work of subject leaders has not developed since the previous inspection. They do not have a good understanding of their role. They have not received sufficient guidance and training and, as a result, are not making the contribution to school improvement that they should. Subject leaders are keen and willing to develop their role. At present they are not involved in monitoring teaching and learning, and identifying weaknesses in relation to their subject and planning for improvement.

The single central record is now satisfactory. Policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding are beginning to be shared with all the staff. Key members have started putting policies and procedures in place for monitoring and supporting vulnerable children. A whole-day training session is planned for all staff to receive up to date, high quality, appropriate training, guidance, support and supervision to undertake the effective safeguarding of pupils.

The school governing body was replaced by an interim executive board the day before this monitoring visit. The new board is scheduled to meet for the first time following this monitoring visit. As a consequence, they have played no part in the school's development to date.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that that all safeguarding requirements are met – satisfactory.
- Improve school self-evaluation procedures in all areas of the school's work to help identify where improvements are required – satisfactory.
- Ensure that the monitoring by subject leaders is rigorous and focuses on pupils' learning and that findings lead to actions designed to secure improvement – inadequate.
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to account through challenge and support and sets a clear direction for its work – inadequate.



## External support

The quality and impact of the support provided by the local authority and the school improvement partner is satisfactory. The action plan produced by the local authority is appropriate and focuses on the key issues. Time scales and foci may have to be amended to ensure that support designed to improve practice is tailored to teachers' individual needs. The school improvement partner has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The local authority has taken appropriate measures to secure effective governance by establishing an interim executive board. However, it is too early to judge its effectiveness in terms of impact on the areas of improvement.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the effectiveness of targeted intervention programmes so that they impact positively on pupil progress.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should be attaining by the end of each year group.