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Mrs Lauren Connor
Executive Headteacher
Nyland Special School
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Swindon
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Dear Mrs Connor

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Nyland Special School

Following my visit, to your school on 17 June 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 second 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 – satisfactory

Progress since the last inspection – satisfactory.

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed after discussion with HMI.

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 Swindon.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Nyland Special School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 17 June 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with staff, the site headteacher, the executive headteacher, groups of pupils, representatives from the governing body, and the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection visit a new executive headteacher has been appointed from a National Support School in the borough. This appointment was made following a hard Federation between Nyland School, and Moredon and Rodbourne Primary Schools, pending formal confirmation of this arrangement for September 2010. All three share the same executive headteacher.

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

Since the last inspection pupils' rate of progress remains inconsistent across the school and is directly related to the quality of teachers' planning and the targeted adult support provided in lessons. There are a few elements of good progress, but too often pupils do not learn enough in lessons due to a lack of challenging tasks. Adults continue to dominate the academic learning of pupils through too much talk and not enough time and space for pupils to try to work problems out for themselves, or with each other. In the better lessons seen, pupils worked in groups with an adult using clear, well-focused questions to help them. In others adults took complete control of the activity with pupils becoming passive or distracted.

Teachers are using information provided by senior leaders to devise lesson objectives. These are now being used well to plan activities and the new curriculum changes are making lessons noticeably more fun and interesting to pupils. Individual learning targets, however, are insufficiently used to ensure that work is suitably challenging, particularly for those ready for harder tasks. Staff do not have sufficient knowledge, support or training to accurately measure learning steps taken in lessons. A consequence is that pupils do not have sufficient understanding about their individual learning targets or the next steps that they need to take to achieve higher levels of attainment.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring visit:

- introduce assessment systems as a matter of urgency so that:
 - pupils' progress can be tracked and increased over time to ensure it is at least satisfactory and information is available to teachers to guide their lesson – satisfactory progress
 - teaching meets pupils' individual learning needs – inadequate progress.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance and behaviour have continued to improve. The apple reward system and the monitoring of behaviour by senior staff have paid dividends. The stability of staff has helped create far greater consistency in how incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with and this has improved the health and safety of staff and pupils. A good example of this was seen in one lesson where a pupil became angry and cross. Adults used techniques that were well established and known to help him regain control of his emotions. It was so effective that within a couple of minutes he was busily working on his written task without fuss and without having disturbed the learning of his peers. Discussion with pupils also showed that they were beginning to learn to respect each other more and consider each other's needs. This was demonstrated in many lessons.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring visit:

- improve behaviour as a matter of urgency, so that pupils are clear about the standards expected and learning is not disrupted, by:
 - developing consistency among staff in the awarding of merits for positive behaviour – good
 - carrying out and acting upon risk assessments to ensure the health and safety of pupils and adults – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring visit. Nevertheless, pupils' progress remains far too slow for them to catch up and attain as well as they could. Senior leaders are aware of this and the school is rightly in the early stages of establishing a more creative, primary-focused curriculum.

There is a very high adult-to-pupil ratio. Given this, and the improvements to behaviour, it is unclear why classroom doors need to be kept locked. In the lessons seen, on this and the last visit, adults were often not sufficiently utilised by teachers to enhance learning but rather hindered independence, peer learning and play. Too often older pupils are not encouraged to develop independent social skills. For example, a pupil who will be joining mainstream secondary school in September was escorted to the lavatory and back.

Classroom environments have improved since the last visit, but expectations of what a good-quality primary-based learning environment should be has not been established. Wall displays have improved and attention now needs to be paid to making sure that they are used for learning as well as celebration. In particular, many of them are not 'dyslexic friendly'. In the better classroom environments more independent and higher-quality learning takes place as a result. For example, in one lesson seen, because there was a soft sitting area with attractive books freely available, a pupil, while waiting for his partner to complete his writing, went of his own volition to sit and read one of the books in a careful and considered manner. He was able to leave the book and return to the main class activity when his partner

was ready. This was in stark contrast to another lesson where a dictionary was unlocked out of a cupboard by an adult, used once, and then locked away again.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring visit:

- improve the curriculum to ensure that it engages pupils and meets their emotional and academic needs – inadequate progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim executive board has worked well with the local authority and the senior leadership team to create the possibility of an exciting future for the school. The facility for providing a greater understanding and knowledge about the academic needs of primary-aged pupils has improved. The restructuring of the leadership team is very new and the measurement of the depth of the impact that this will make is too early to judge.

Lessons and behaviour have been monitored by senior leaders. From this information they are in a better position to notice trends and patterns. They are aware that the analysis of possible links between behaviour and learning patterns is an area that is the next focus to help drive improvement.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring visit:

- increase the governing body's skill in checking and challenging the school's performance and in ensuring that statutory requirements are met – satisfactory progress.

External support

External support provided by the local authority has continued to ensure that the school remains a safe place in which to work and learn. The local authority, in partnership with the interim executive board, has resolved the future plans for the school and has made secure appointments. They have also ensured that pupils are appropriately placed on the school roll and that those who are waiting to join it receive the education to which they are entitled.

The action plan provided by the local authority has been improved and adjusted since the appointment of the new executive headteacher and is based on actions for the school following their monitoring visits.