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Thursday 1 July 2010

Mrs Catherine Bonich
Bentfield Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bonich

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bentfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 June – 1 July 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 October 2009. 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 – good.

Newly Qualified Teachers may now be appointed.

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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Bentfield Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 30 June – 1 July 2010

Evidence

The inspector met with senior leaders and various other members of staff, the chair of governors, and two representatives from the local authority. He observed seven lessons, involving five teachers, and examined pupils' work and various school documents. It was not possible to observe Years 5 and 6, because the visit coincided with their residential week in Norfolk.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in March 2010, the interim headteacher has taken up post as permanent headteacher. The local authority has therefore withdrawn the advisory headteacher it had previously provided. One teacher is leaving at the end of the summer term and two new teachers have been appointed for September 2010.

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

Attainment is broadly average, but with variations, mainly due to underachievement in previous years. For example, pupils in Year 6 are currently making satisfactory progress, but their attainment is a little below average because they did not make enough progress in Years 3 and 4. Pupils in Year 3 are making good progress this year but have not fully made up the ground they lost in Key Stage 1. Learning and progress for younger pupils has improved, particularly in Year 2 and the reception class. Pupils join in lessons with greater enthusiasm, responding to the better teaching. In the lessons seen during this visit, pupils made satisfactory progress overall. Learning has improved for the most able pupils. Pupils continue to make very good progress in the nursery and satisfactory progress in the reception class.

The school has an enhanced provision which caters for several pupils with more severe learning difficulties than typically found in a mainstream primary school. These pupils are fully integrated in lessons. They are making good progress because they follow specially adapted learning programmes that address their various needs.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve achievement, especially in Key Stage 1 – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Since the last visit, pupils' behaviour, enjoyment and preparedness for learning has improved. Attendance remains above average, with very few pupils being



persistently absent. Pupils get on with each other well and show particular consideration for their peers who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching and learning have improved since the last visit. Teaching remains outstanding in the nursery and is now satisfactory or better in all other classes, with some good features. The recent local authority review came to the same conclusion. A common strength is the way teachers plan their lessons to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, increasingly using information about pupils' prior learning. For example, in one lesson, the higher attaining pupils were allowed to start individual work after a quick briefing from the teacher, while the other pupils were given more detailed instruction. With better planning, teaching assistants are used more productively, each having a clearly understood role. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good one-to-one support in lessons.

The school now has much clearer summary assessment data. In addition, teachers are giving more guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, through marking and through talking to pupils. They are also checking more regularly on pupils' progress during lessons to identify and address any problems. However, there is still some unevenness in assessment. For example, adults sometimes intervene to make sure that a pupil gets the 'right answer' without explaining where the pupil is going wrong. Teachers do not always use probing questions to explore the extent of pupils' understanding of a topic.

Judgement

Progress since the last the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- use assessment data to improve planning to meet different needs and to identify clear, sharp targets for pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher has given a clear direction for the school and each member of staff now knows precisely what is expected of them. Senior leaders have more time to think strategically as they are no longer bogged down in crisis management. This is evident in the clear planning to address the school's weaknesses. New monitoring systems have improved the quality of self-evaluation, which is now linked closely to analysis of pupil progress data and lesson observations. However, the senior leaders have not reached the stage where all the necessary data is at their fingertips.

The effective leadership of teaching and learning is evident in the improving assessment and the elimination of inadequate lessons. A new staffing structure, which takes effect in September 2010, is distributing leadership more widely by



giving effective teachers the chance to take on new responsibilities. Professional development is being arranged for those new to coordinator and leadership roles.

The governing body has an action plan which complements the school improvement plan. It has reviewed its committee structures and is informing itself better. For example, it has conducted a safeguarding audit and issued a parental questionnaire.

The safeguarding issues that were identified at the inspection in October 2009 have been resolved. The school site is now secure, and the school has clear procedures to ensure safe access for those who need it.

Judgements

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management at all levels, including the governing body, through better monitoring, evaluation and planning – good
- ensure safeguarding arrangements are fully met as a matter of urgency – good.

External support

The local authority provides strong support for the school, which it has pledged to continue beyond the statutory period. The support of an advanced skills teacher has played an important role in improving teaching in the reception and Year 2 classes.