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Mrs Mary Langton
Headteacher
Appleton Primary School
Appleton Road
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Dear Mrs Langton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Appleton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 07 and 08 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 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 visit – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 Hull.

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Appleton Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 07 and 08 July 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed parts of nine lessons. She scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils, a representative from the local authority and two members of the governing body. She also scrutinised the school's documents relating to pupils' progress, the work in pupils' books in mathematics in all classes and examples of writing from two classes.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been no staff changes. The school continues to work closely with its partnership school and be involved in the Improving Schools Programme. Two new governors have joined the governing body and the local authority continues to provide a high level of support to the school. The number of pupils on roll is rising steadily.

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

Since the last visit leaders and managers have focused their work on improving pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. They have embedded the tracking system which was introduced last term and are closely monitoring the progress of all groups of pupils. This has resulted in improvements to pupils' attainment in reading in all classes and is beginning to accelerate progress in writing for most pupils, although this is taking more time to have an impact. Senior leaders have identified that progress in mathematics is weaker and staff have begun to put in place systems to tackle this through closer monitoring of learning in mathematics lessons and additional professional development. However, there is a legacy of underachievement in mathematics for older pupils and they have further to catch up to national age-related expectations.

Pupils' presentation in books and their spelling and letter formation have all improved since the last visit as a result of a new marking policy. Work in pupils' books shows a consistency of presentation and feedback to pupils telling them how their work has improved. Pupils say that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work further. Pupils have targets cards in their books which clearly show them the next small steps in learning and these are beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress in writing. Most teachers are using the information from assessment in lessons to motivate pupils and to plan different activities for different abilities.

The assessments made this term on pupils' attainment have been moderated by the local authority and are accurate. This is a result of the cross-phase moderation that is taking place regularly coupled with meetings, with every member of staff and with pupils, about pupils' progress. Pupils in lessons have a willingness to talk about their learning, and a renewed enthusiasm and motivation.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6, particularly in English – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching and learning is improving slowly. All staff have taken part in intensive professional development to improve aspects of classroom practice. Staff have responded positively to this training and aspects of it can be seen in all lessons. There is a consistency of expectations which is improving the learning environment, although there is a lack of pupils' writing and mathematical work on display around the school. Particular improvements seen were the sharing of lesson objectives with pupils; activities which are better meeting the needs of pupils because they are closely matched to their different abilities; the use of interactive whiteboards to engage pupils and extend their learning; as well as less time spent sitting on the carpet listening to teachers and more time engaged in talking with partners and feeding back responses. In mathematics lessons pupils are spending more time engaged in problem-solving activities but opportunities for pupils to engage in the quick recall of number facts from an early age are still lacking in pace.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage unit the reorganisation of provision is beginning to have an impact on children's outcomes. Children's ability to recognise letters and use these to attempt to write words has improved. This is because the unit now provides more opportunities for writing both inside and outside and new planning is beginning to have an impact on children's attitudes and their confidence in initiating learning for themselves. There has been less improvement in providing as many opportunities for children to initiate activities to improve their counting and calculation abilities.

The staff in the unit are working as a close-knit team and have developed individual profiles of every child which are improving relationships with parents and carers and involving them more closely in their children's learning. The team assesses learning in a range of different ways through, for example, observation, conversation, photographs and pieces of annotated work. These are used to assess where children are and plan future learning which moves children forward.



Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve provision and leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

With the support of the local authority and the partnership school, leadership and management are improving. Senior leaders are now involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They are working closely together to evaluate the success of their actions and identify the next steps to improvement. This has led them to realise that they need to focus on progress in mathematics. The clear focus across the school on pupils' progress is bearing fruit and staff are all clear about what they are working towards. Monitoring of teaching and learning in classrooms is better focused on how well pupils are learning and staff have a clearer picture of what the best practice looks like. Staff's morale is high and the school maintains the confidence of parents and carers, which is evident in the rising school roll.

The governing body, through the committee focused on pupils' progress, monitors the school's work and has a clear understanding of the progress all groups of pupils are making. They are beginning to ask challenging questions and identify the data that they need to evaluate how well the school is doing. They support the headteacher and staff well in making improvements through closer liaison between the headteacher and the Chair who meet regularly to discuss progress against the action plan. The whole governing body has undertaken training and governors have a much better understanding of their role in monitoring the school's work.

The school was asked to improve safeguarding procedures and improve pupils' understanding of diverse cultures. Safeguarding is a high priority, is regularly updated and meets all statutory requirements. Much work has been undertaken to raise pupils' awareness of different cultures around the world through visits and visitors to the school, the recent week on the theme of 'Who do you think you are?' and topics based around World Cup countries. The school has also achieved the intermediate International School Award and is working closely with other schools in the area to develop community cohesion.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders and managers take swift and effective action to drive the school's improvement – good.
- Ensure that safeguarding procedures are secure – good.



External support

The local authority has produced a detailed raising attainment plan which is closely aligned with the school improvement plan. This is closely monitored by the School Improvement Partner and the local authority to ensure that the school is on track. Records show that the actions for improvement, coupled with increased and relevant professional development for staff and governors, is ensuring that the school is meeting its targets.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their quick recall of number facts
 - raising the profile of mathematics across the school.