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Wednesday 7 July 2010

Mrs Lesley Brewer
Huthwaite All Saint's CofE (Aided) Infant School
Common Road
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Dear Mrs Brewer

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Huthwaite All Saint's CofE (Aided) Infant School

Following my visit to your school on Monday 5 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

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 Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire and the Diocesan Board of Education, Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon
Additional Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Huthwaite All Saint's CofE (Aided) Infant School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Monday 5 July 2010

Evidence

The monitoring inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the headteacher acting as the local leader of education, teachers, a group of pupils, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The substantive headteacher retired in February 2010 and a temporary headteacher was appointed to lead the school until September 2010. A temporary head of school will take charge in September 2010 until December 2010. The new head of school role fits the collaboration agreed with the John Davies Primary School beginning in September 2010, and whose headteacher is to be the executive headteacher of both schools.

The Year 1 teacher has been absent for an extended period of time and, since September 2009, the class has been taught by temporary teacher who is newly qualified. The Year 2 teacher has taken early retirement as from August 2010, and this class is being taught by an assistant headteacher seconded from a local school whose headteacher is acting as the local leader of education supporting school improvement. Interviews of candidates for the Year 2 post and the temporary post for Year 1 took place at the same time as the visit. Interviews have yet to take place for the post of head of school.

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

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 classes are making satisfactory progress. While there is strong leadership driving improvement in standards and progress, all of what is now in place to do so, especially around strengthening teaching and learning, is very recent and to a large extent still needs embedding. Satisfactory teaching and learning in both classes is beginning to build upon the good start children make in Reception year. Assessment procedures, recently introduced in Years 1 and 2, now provide a rigorous measure of pupils' progress covering the last five months. Assessment information for Year 1 indicates there is much less underachievement. Nearly all pupils are making the amount of progress expected in reading and mathematics, although in mathematics one third of pupils are exceeding this. In writing, however, the progress of one third remains inadequate. The close tracking of progress clearly highlights the continued weakness in writing, and a quick response by the leadership is giving rise to the development of several new means of raising writing standards.



In Year 2, satisfactory progress is consistent across reading, writing and mathematics. Very few pupils are now making less than expected progress. The unvalidated results from this year's end of Key Stage 1 statutory assessments indicate an increase in the proportion of pupils attaining broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a better outcome overall, and a marked improvement in mathematics. While there is some improvement in the proportion reaching higher levels, it remains below average in reading and mathematics. The satisfactory progress seen in lessons and evidenced in pupils' books adds credence to the school's assessments.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and have many positive things to say about their work such as learning to calculate using money and improving their writing with punctuation, connectives and exciting opening statements. They are excited by the new work now being introduced in literacy lessons. This clearly reflects the positive impact of the leaders' thrust to raise standards as well as the quality of teaching and learning.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour is improved and is good across the school. Pupils respond positively to, and benefit from, the clear expectations now being set by staff, including the temporary teachers. Pupils are well supervised at all times and stay safe. Great care is exercised in planning class excursions out of school. The restlessness seen in lessons during the inspection was not seen during this monitoring visit; it is no longer a significant feature as pupils are mainly well engaged and cooperative. In the playground during breaks, pupils are calm and considerate towards each other. Playtime is well organised with staff leading games, with most pupils joining in. Those who prefer a quieter time happily associate with each other in pairs or small groups. Records show there is very occasional bullying, which is dealt with by staff and does not significantly concern pupils.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching and the use of assessment to support learning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Effective monitoring of lessons leading to support for teachers and their assistants, and the implementation of more robust assessment have contributed to improving teaching. However, the stability in school leadership and teaching staff is by no means yet established, so improvements remain tentative. Nevertheless, the current leadership has made sure the temporary teachers function effectively and are at this time accelerating the rate of pupils' progress. They have benefitted from support from other school's own classroom assessment, visits to schools to see good practice, and support in using information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching. This, alongside the development of some new methods of teaching literacy



and numeracy, has boosted morale, confidence and the drive to raise standards, which has started to work.

It is clear from the lessons seen that teachers are focusing on strengthening learning by helping pupils' understand what is expected of them. Pupils' writing skills, the breadth of their writing and problem-solving in mathematics are now beginning to benefit from their strong emphasis in literacy and numeracy lessons. However, there is not enough consistency in the expectations for writing, especially its presentation. While the marking of work has attained a sharper focus on what pupils have done well and what they could improve, it is not consistent in this respect and has not tackled handwriting and presentation head-on. There is more impact in the teaching of mathematics, which is reflected in much improved results, and the work in books is often well organised.

Teachers make learning enjoyable and, by asking pupils to discuss together a problem or to share their ideas with each other, they are increasing their engagement. This practice is not solidly embedded and sometimes opportunities to support learning are missed, in particular, at the end of lessons when pupils could evaluate their own learning and that of others. Year 2 pupils are not accustomed to working for an extended period without close adult involvement. When asked to do so, some pupils lose their concentration and their learning and progress slows considerably. In whole class teaching, expectations have improved, but otherwise they are not high enough to encourage pupils to stay actively involved and be responsible for their own learning.

Much time and effort is being given to strengthening provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT. Judging from the work in pupils' books, there is an increasing breadth in pupils' written work. While problem-solving in mathematics is more prominent, other areas of the subject are not being taught to a sufficient extent, such as measurement. The work needed to link subjects together to promote basic skills across all learning opportunities and to provide more creative, exciting work and activities has not yet got fully underway.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and accelerate pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' learning – satisfactory progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school is already feeling the benefit of the temporary headteacher's leadership. In addition, the partnership with the local leader of education is helping the school to gain and maintain a sharp focus on the priorities for improvement, and is driving the school forward. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is now



at the heart of leadership. A system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress was quickly put into place after the inspection. While this is at an early stage of development, leaders and teachers now have a clear picture of individual pupils and groups, in relation to their attainment and progress in literacy and numeracy. This has set the agenda for tackling the weaknesses in pupils' performance, leading to the re-organisation of pupil groupings to provide ability groups, booster groups and planned individual support, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It provides the basis on which teachers are refining their planning to better meet pupils' needs and to ensure their work always challenges them. Subject leadership is not far advanced and this hinders further curriculum development. The quality of teaching and learning is kept under regular review by the headteacher and others from outside the school. The quality of teaching and learning are becoming better understood, leading to improvement. Teachers are being held to account by leaders and governors and they are responding positively to this.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve the systems for tracking pupils' progress so that any underachievement is identified quickly and the school intervenes promptly to boost progress – satisfactory progress
- Improve the systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning and all of the school's work – satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority is working effectively alongside governors and school leaders to provide good support for the school. There have been some immediate benefits of the support deriving from the temporary appointments of key staff and in establishing constructive partnerships. Furthermore, a new school improvement partner is taking up this monitoring and support role soon. In addition, the provision of extra ICT resources, and advice on their use from the local authority's ICT consultant, has given greater scope to teachers to plan and teach engaging and enjoyable lessons. As a result, the school has been able to move forward on its immediate priorities for improvement, the strengthening of teaching and learning in particular. The local authority is closely concerned with ensuring during the next period of significant staff changes that the current clear direction in school leadership and the pace of improvement are maintained.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the improvements being made to strengthen learning are implemented effectively in every lesson.



- Develop the existing curriculum so that it provides a breadth of well-planned work and activities matched to pupils' needs and interests, and ensures a well-organised cross-curricular provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT.