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15 July 2010

Mr Andrew Eastwood
Headteacher
Fountain Primary School
Fountain Street
Morley
Leeds
LS27 0AW

Dear Mr Eastwood

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fountain Primary School

Following my visit with Mrs Shirley Herring, Additional Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 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 January 2010. 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors and the Interim Director of Children's Services for Leeds City Council.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional inspector

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fountain Street Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 July 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with key staff, members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.

Context

The local authority appointed a temporary assistant headteacher initially for two and latterly for three days per week from Easter 2010. From September 2010 until Easter 2011 the appointment will be full time. A leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has been appointed and is due to take up the post from September 2010. The deputy headteacher is currently absent and another member of the leadership team is on maternity leave. More time has been allocated to administrative staff and the bursar freeing the headteacher to focus more on strategic planning and development. The learning mentors have been made permanent securing their role in improving attendance. Two local authority members of the governing body were appointed following the January inspection and one has since resigned.

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

The 2010 provisional Year 6 test results show a significant improvement on the 2009 results in English and are likely to be close to the national average. However, results in mathematics dipped and are likely to remain low. Although progress in mathematics in Year 6 has accelerated since the last inspection, this was not sufficient to enable enough pupils to make up the gaps in their knowledge.

The school's data shows that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is starting to rise. Progress is beginning to accelerate more rapidly in reading and writing than in mathematics. There remain variations between year groups with progress being slower overall for Year 5 pupils. Girls continue to achieve better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving their achievement at a similar rate to their peers.

Pupils' confidence in speaking and writing is increasing with the greater focus given to talk and use of drama in lessons. Paired talk was used constructively in a number of lessons and in Year 6 pupils rose to the challenge of storytelling. Pupils are more involved in taking responsibility for their own learning. The introduction of 'learning logs' in which pupils record their own lines of enquiry for homework in their chosen topics are helping to develop research skills and prepare pupils for independent learning.

Other relevant outcomes for pupils

Attendance has improved significantly since the inspection in January 2010. Evidence shows that it is continuing to rise. The school is now monitoring attendance more rigorously as a result of the permanent appointment of two learning mentors and the increase in their hours of work. Parents and carers are more aware of the need to telephone school if their children are unavoidably absent. They are now more likely to bring their children in later rather than keeping them at home all day. The school's close involvement with the attendance officer has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of pupils whose absence falls below 80%.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Monitor pupils' attendance more rigorously and take both general and targeted action to improve it – good

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of learning in lessons is improving as a result of improved teaching. The proportion of good teaching is increasing, although still lower than required to accelerate progress significantly. There is still too high a proportion of teaching that is satisfactory and there remains some inadequate teaching. Pupils continue to be willing and eager learners, listening carefully to staff and applying themselves diligently to tasks. Increasingly, pupils enjoy tasks that interest them and give them an opportunity to work independently. Nevertheless, there remain too many lessons where pupils spend too long listening to the teachers or they are not stimulated or challenged by the tasks. Most lessons have clear learning intentions and success criteria or 'steps to success' that are shared with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. In the best lessons teachers refer to these frequently, to ensure that pupils remain well focused. A greater variety of activities is being used and pupils are more directly involved in learning and better engaged.

Teachers' use of assessment, while improving, is not yet being implemented consistently to match tasks to all pupils' differing needs, particularly in ensuring sufficient challenge for more-able pupils. Assessments in reading, writing and mathematics are recorded and analysed each half term and used to inform discussions on pupils' progress between leaders and every class teacher. As a result of this process, support for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is improving and progress overall is beginning to accelerate. There is not yet a whole-school policy for marking to ensure that it is consistently effective.

Developments in the curriculum are promoting basic skills more effectively. Discreet lessons for literacy and numeracy are still in place and the focus of these lessons is improving as analysis of pupils' performance is used by leaders to identify weaknesses in learning, for example, in sentence construction in literacy. This has contributed to the improving attainment in English. Similar analysis in numeracy has highlighted a

need to improve learning of elements such as number bonds and place value. These areas are now being addressed and are helping to improve progress but have not yet had a measureable impact on the attainment of the oldest pupils.

The curriculum is currently being redesigned to link subjects together and to develop personal skills alongside key skills for learning and thinking. The school is working effectively with a partner school to this end. Pupils were consulted and identified a preference for more first-hand experiences and they are now increasingly involved in steering their own learning, for example in their choice of a famous person to research in Year 2 and their own choice of a country to research in Year 4/5.

A greater range of after-school activities is now on offer and older pupils have enjoyed setting up clubs for younger pupils, with adult supervision. Opportunities for personal development are increasing as pupils conduct their own research. They are participating well in establishing the school garden following the building work and are proud of the plants they have grown to enhance the appearance of the school.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all teaching is at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good or better in order to enable pupils to reach the standards they are capable of – satisfactory
- Improve the curriculum by promoting basic skills more effectively, securing pupils' interest and engagement and providing more opportunities to develop personal skills – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership team has been strengthened by the appointment of one of the local authority's lead teacher for learning to a fixed-term post of assistant headteacher. The headteacher is ambitious for the school and the more challenging targets that are being set for pupils' achievement are helping to raise aspirations. His drive for improvement is reinforcing the commitment among leaders, governors and staff to improve. The morale and confidence of staff is building. The leadership team has been effective in motivating staff and implementing developments that are starting to have an impact on improving provision and pupils' achievement. However, the continuity of the leadership team is at risk because of unavoidable absence of some members of the team. The school is currently working on plans to secure the continuity of the leadership team.

The school's action planning is supporting the drive for improvement. Some of the timescales have proved to be ambitious, particularly in implementing the formal observation of teaching and learning, and these have been put back until the autumn term. Clear systems are established to monitor the progress made in all the areas identified for improvement in the action plan. The first evaluation by leaders, governors and the local authority carried out earlier this term is largely accurate.

Work has started on developing the skills of leaders. The governing body has been strengthened and members are undergoing training to understand their role better, particularly in monitoring and evaluating the progress of improvement in the school. Two key leaders have used the opportunities offered through participation in leadership courses to develop their skills of monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision. This is resulting in more carefully focused work in literacy and numeracy lessons. Further work on developing the skills of leaders is planned for next term.

The school has appropriately focused on ensuring that outcomes of pupils can be measured accurately and frequently. As a result of more rigorous assessment systems, underperformance of pupils is recognised and tackled sooner and teachers are held more to account for the progress pupils make. With the support of the local authority's School Improvement Adviser, leaders are checking the accuracy of planning and assessment and the match of work in pupils' books to pupils' needs. This is resulting in a greater focus on accelerating progress, particularly for underperforming pupils.

Leaders are more aware of the variations in the quality of teaching through frequent informal observation and improved analysis of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress in each class. Formal monitoring of learning and teaching through classroom observation is planned for autumn term.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management across the school – satisfactory

External support

The local authority's statement of action to support the school has been amended and now meets requirements. It is providing an effective tool in guiding the action that needs to be taken and the monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress.

The local authority's support is effective. The provision of a lead teacher for learning has strengthened the school's leadership team and has been particularly effective in improving systems to assess and track pupils' progress. The School Improvement Adviser is supporting the development of the leadership skills of key leaders through working with them on monitoring the work of class teachers. Consultants for literacy and numeracy are providing effective support. The partnership with Morley Victoria Primary School has been helpful in improving the curriculum.

Priorities for further improvement

- Secure stability of the leadership team.
- Accelerate the school's plan to implement monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning.