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29 September 2010

Miss Joanne Smithson
Acting Headteacher
Luttons Community Primary School
West Lutton
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 8TF

Dear Mrs Smithson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Luttons Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 September 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Christine Harrison
Additional inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and science by summer term 2011 by:
 - fully using accurate assessment information to make expectations clear and to plan activities in lessons that meet the wide range of ages and abilities
 - setting pupils precise targets and marking all work consistently so that pupils know what to do to improve
 - adapting the curriculum to match the different age groups and abilities in classes.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing improvement by:
 - ensuring that plans for improvement focus sharply on outcomes related to raising attainment and are implemented promptly and fully
 - setting quantifiable criteria for success precisely at the outset, making clear exactly how those outcomes will be measured.

- Improve attendance by:
 - building the partnership with parents and continuing to work with the local authority's education welfare service to reduce term-time holidays and persistent absence.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Luttons Community Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28 September 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a group of staff, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, representatives of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher has been absent from school since the last inspection in March 2010. A consultant headteacher was appointed at that time and then also took on the role of acting headteacher for the summer term, working in the school for three days a week. She continues as consultant headteacher, spending one day each week in school and is now fulfilling the role of coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. From the beginning of the autumn term, the headteacher of a neighbouring school has become acting headteacher of this school. She divides her time equally between the two schools. From September there have been changes in the staffing arrangements so that both classes are no longer shared between two teachers but are taught, for almost all of the week, by a single teacher. The number of pupils in the school has fallen from 34 at the time of the inspection to 28.

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

Pupils are happy to be in school and respond enthusiastically to teachers' efforts to engage and motivate them. They appreciate the better resources, notably the reading books that they can now take home, and the fact that they now take a more active part in lessons. Despite these improvements, the progress that pupils make in lessons has not improved sufficiently for them to regain the ground they lost in earlier years. Some groups make good progress in lessons but, for others, there are significant portions of lessons where they do not learn enough.

The school's tracking of pupils' progress is of limited value since, prior to July 2010, much of the assessment information was unreliable. Nevertheless, the evidence it does provide indicates that pupils' attainment overall shows little sign of significant recovery since the last inspection. There have been some improvements in pupils' assessments and test results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, notably for higher attainers in Year 6, indicating better attainment for them than for the previous cohort. However, evidence suggests that this is due largely to these groups having a higher proportion of more-able pupils than the preceding year groups, not to a

significant improvement in pupils' progress. The tracking also raises concerns about individual pupils who have apparently made no progress at all in the last year. While this may be partly the result of inaccurate earlier assessments, it nevertheless suggests that there has been no effective intervention to overcome problems.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and science in by summer term 2011 – inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school, as they did at the time of the last inspection. They are friendly and welcoming and treat each other politely and with respect. Pupils say that there is very little bullying and they are well informed about what to do if there is a problem. They know the basic principles of a healthy lifestyle. School lunches are nutritious and appetising but many pupils bring packed lunches which often reflect their preferences rather than their understanding of healthier options.

The school and the local authority have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance. Links with parents are much better than they were and pupils and their parents have been made more aware of the importance of coming to school regularly. Some parents said, in a recent meeting, that pupils' increased enjoyment of their lessons is a major factor in encouraging better attendance. The result is that attendance has increased from 91.3% in 2008/2009 to 94.8% for 2009/2010. In addition, the number of persistent absentees has been reduced. It is now necessary to remain vigilant and continue to discourage strongly the occasional absences that still persist and interrupt pupils' learning.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve attendance – good

The effectiveness of provision

Teachers work hard and are committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. However, both are relatively inexperienced and have not yet had sufficient support and guidance to enable them to teach as effectively as possible. Some aspects of teaching have improved since the last inspection. Pupils are now taught for most of the time by a single teacher, which they prefer and which provides useful consistency and continuity. Teachers manage pupils well and create a good atmosphere for learning. They select learning activities that pupils often enjoy. Marking is better than it was and teachers generally suggest points for improvement. However, the most important weakness remains. Planning the work of the various groups in each class does not take enough account of pupils' different abilities and stages of learning; as a result, it does not meet the needs of all pupils in the class.

The priority now is to use assessment information to plan exactly what is needed for each pupil to get to their next stage. Learning objectives need to be clearer and more precise so that pupils are aware of what they need to know, understand or be able to do, by the end of the lesson. It will then be easier for teachers to reinforce learning by referring back to the objectives and checking that they have been fully achieved. The overall planning of the curriculum remains satisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection, but planning is not currently detailed enough to ensure good progress for pupils. Teaching assistants have good questioning skills and interact well with pupils. However, they sometimes remain too firmly attached to particular groups when other groups in the class require some intervention to enable them to make better progress.

Weaknesses in the use of assessment information were identified at the last inspection and remain a major area needing improvement. The assessment information from July 2010 has been checked externally and is regarded as reliable. Hence, the school now has, for the first time in recent years, a baseline from which to assess pupils' progress. However, assessment information is not yet used to evaluate the progress of individual pupils, identify any underachievement and take action to rectify any weaknesses.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The arrangements for the school's leadership have not been effective in enabling it to move forward as quickly as it should. Questions about the long-term leadership of the school remain unresolved. Successive acting headteachers have worked hard, first to improve staff morale, which was initially very low, and then to put in place essential features. For example, the administrative arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities had to be secured as a matter of urgency. Better communication with parents was an essential pre-cursor to improving attendance. Relationships with the local community needed to be developed. These improvements have been achieved. However, with a part-time acting headteacher, previously unfamiliar with the school, this has left little time for the development of learning and the required emphasis on pupils' progress.

The expectations of the school's leaders have not been high enough. The school's aim, expressed in development planning, is for pupils 'to make expected progress'. This is not sufficient for pupils who have previously underachieved; they need to make good progress in order to catch up. The change from one part-time acting headteacher to another has produced difficulties because the handing over of essential information was not efficient enough. Lesson observations have been supportive and encouraging for teachers but have not placed enough emphasis on how much pupils learn so have been too positive in their judgements and not helpful in developing the emphasis on pupils' progress. A performance management system within which teachers can be helped to evaluate their progress and discuss their development needs has not yet been established.

A further weakness is the absence of any subject leadership in the school. There has rightly been an emphasis on improving teachers' teaching skills rather than trying to introduce leadership training at this stage. Nevertheless, this shortage of available expertise is a disadvantage, particularly when the acting headteacher cannot always be in school.

The work of the governing body is constantly improving. Governors identified problems and requested help from the local authority before the last inspection and thus established themselves as both responsible and challenging. Since then they have introduced a sensible committee structure to enable them to work more efficiently. At the same time, they are investigating and evaluating the possibility of longer-term options for the school. They acknowledge that it is difficult for them to judge pupils' progress so are undertaking training to enable them to improve their understanding of the school's performance data and to keep a close watch on that aspect of its work.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing improvement – inadequate

External support

The local authority statement of action was evaluated by Ofsted and approved in June 2010. It is a comprehensive statement but its implementation has not been successful in moving the school forward quickly enough. The local authority has been particularly effective in its contribution to developing the links with parents and to improving pupils' attendance. It has also been active in supporting the teaching of literacy and numeracy. However, the discontinuities in the temporary leadership provided for the school since the inspection have restricted progress. The need for support and guidance for the teaching staff has not been fully met.

Priorities for further improvement

- Establish a secure and reliable assessment framework which is used by teachers to plan lessons to meet all needs.
- Ensure that pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress in all lessons.
- Raise senior leaders' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve.
- Ensure that the professional development needs of staff are fully met.