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4 February 2011

Miss Sue Hawke
Headteacher
Great Coates Primary School
Crosland Road
Grimsby
Lincolnshire
DN37 9EN

Dear Miss Hawke,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Great Coates Primary School

Following my visit with to your school on 2 and 3 February 2011, 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 second 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 are 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 East Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

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

- Improve achievement and raise standards of attainment for all pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information to support their planning and delivery of lessons
 - making lessons challenging, particularly for the more able pupils
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write independently and at length
 - marking work effectively so that pupils know how well they are doing and what they could do better.
- Ensure that leaders and managers take swift and effective action to improve provision, particularly teaching by:
 - rigorously monitoring and developing the quality of teaching and learning to ensure both are at least consistently good
 - holding teachers to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes.
- Ensure that the governing body:
 - monitors and evaluates the work of the school and holds staff to account for the standards achieved
 - promotes community cohesion by extending the school's links with diverse communities locally, nationally and globally.

Special measures: monitoring of Great Coates Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 February 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, a group of pupils, members of the interim executive board (IEB), representatives from the local authority and teachers.

Context

Since the last visit, two teachers have been appointed and one has left the school. The IEB became responsible for governance on 1 October 2010.

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

The rate of progress made by pupils across the school in English and mathematics is much faster than at the time of the last inspection. This is as a result of the marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. For example, in Year 6, pupils' low standards were a concern at the time of the last monitoring inspection. A significant acceleration in progress means that attainment has risen and pupils are now better placed to achieve their challenging targets by the time they leave Year 6.

Teachers demonstrate that they are much better at using assessment information to pitch work at the correct level for different groups of pupils. The more-able pupils report that they find the work more interesting. However, they also report that it could be even more challenging for them. The inspector agrees with this view, as assessment information shows that, even though progress for the more able has accelerated, it is not yet as fast as it could be. Work in books and in lessons shows that pupils are now better equipped to write at length and in a range of styles.

Marking is most effective in English books. In mathematics, marking is less useful as criticism of work is unhelpful in remedying misconceptions. Pupils' targets have been established for their writing. However, these initiatives are not yet having the impact that they could because they are not sufficiently linked together or embedded in lessons. For example, when marking, teachers comment on improvements that need making, but rarely comment on pupils' progress in achieving their targets or in meeting the lesson objective. While pupils often respond to teachers' comments, they do not always have sufficient opportunity to take the responsibility for the quality of the work through routine self-assessment procedures in lessons.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve achievement and raise standards of attainment for all pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to be well-behaved and their behaviour in lessons is improving. One reason for this is that they report how much more interesting lessons are. Teachers give them more opportunity to demonstrate how their behaviour has a beneficial impact on their learning. For example, pupils in an interesting mathematics lesson in Year 5 worked together in groups, with minimal supervision, solving a probability activity. They demonstrated developing skills of independence, cooperation and creativity. Pupils' cultural development is improving as a result of the greater opportunities afforded by the curriculum to understand about other cultures in the United Kingdom and abroad. For example, during the inspection pupils were thoroughly engrossed in a performance during assembly that celebrated the Chinese New Year. Following this, each class enjoyed the opportunity to learn how to perform a 'Lion Dance'.

The effectiveness of provision

One of the key criticisms of teaching has been that teachers spend too long talking to pupils in lessons rather than engaging them in their work. Teachers have worked hard to overcome this and currently a much better balance has been achieved between teacher-talk and pupils' work. As one pupil correctly reported, 'Teachers used to talk a lot, now we actually get the chance to do things'. The curriculum for English and mathematics has improved. One of the consequences of this is that there are now a much larger proportion of lessons that are judged good. In these lessons, pupils take part in interesting and stimulating activities, the pace of learning is swift and nearly all groups make good progress. In the shrinking proportion of lessons that are satisfactory, pupils' work is insufficiently challenging and expectations of what should be achieved are not explicit enough. When this occurs, pupils, particularly when working independently, are often found lacking concentration so the pace of learning slows.

Science lessons have improved and pupils report how much they enjoy the routine opportunities they have to take part in experiments. This is already bearing fruit, as pupils demonstrate the ability to transfer and apply their scientific skills in other subjects. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, groups of pupils were devising a data-handling investigation and confidently talked about the need to make predictions and ensure that the investigation was fair. This was unprompted by the teacher.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last visit the headteacher, ably supported by the local authority and its partners, has rigorously monitored and evaluated the quality of teaching, learning and progress. This has been instrumental in making the necessary improvements to teaching and learning that are now apparent.

Leadership at other levels is gradually strengthening. Other leaders are aware of what needs to be improved, but they are inexperienced and have had insufficient opportunity to lead the improvements for which they are responsible. For example, they have not had the opportunity to check whether staff training is having an impact on practice as they have few opportunities to observe lessons.

The school's integrated development plan identifies where improvements need to be made, but does not help staff to secure these developments. Targets for improvement are too general and often refer to provision rather than outcomes for pupils. Success criteria are imprecise so it is difficult to measure impact, and timelines and responsibilities are not specific enough. This means that, while everyone is working very hard, leadership is not as efficient as it could be. For example, fortnightly lesson observations take place for quality assurance purposes, but they are not sufficiently linked to the areas for development in the integrated plan or teachers' performance management. As a result, some teachers are unsure of the purpose of these observations, particularly if their teaching has regularly been judged to be good.

The IEB has made a good start. Minutes from their meetings show that members are highly experienced and skilful at challenging and supporting school leaders and the local authority to ensure the necessary improvements to pupils' education. One important initiative is the recent establishment of a parents' panel. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this. The IEB and local authority rightly recognise the importance of planning the return of governance to a school governing body to secure school leadership in the long term.

Good improvements have been made to the leadership and provision for promoting community cohesion. Following an audit and creation of an action plan there have been improvements to the curriculum, as well as productive links with other schools in contrasting communities in the United Kingdom and China. For example, pupils have visited a school in Burnley to celebrate Eid and look forward to hosting a return visit at Easter.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders and managers take swift and effective action to improve provision, particularly teaching – satisfactory
- Ensure that the governing body monitors and evaluates the work of the school and promotes community cohesion – good

External support

School leaders report how much they benefit from the support of the local authority. For example, subject consultants and the recovery manager who have helped to improve teaching. The National Leader in Education, who is also supporting the school, has provided a good role model for school leadership that the school leaders are beginning to emulate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that pupils take greater responsibility for their learning by:
 - refining marking so that there are clear links between advice given and pupils personal targets and lesson objectives
 - linking their targets to regular opportunities for self-assessment.
- Strengthen the impact of the leadership team and foster a stronger team spirit among the staff by:
 - revising the integrated development plan so that priorities are specific, delegation of responsibility is precise and success can be measured in terms of outcomes for pupils
 - developing the delegation skills of the headteacher to empower and hold other leaders to account
 - ensuring that monitoring and evaluation activities are for the purpose of checking success in achieving the priorities in the integrated development plan or are closely linked to performance management objectives.
- Formulate a plan for the re-establishment of a governing body.