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12 May 2011

Mrs Wendy Prestwood
Interim Headteacher
Mrs Janine Carn
Acting Headteacher
Great Coates Primary School
Crosland Road
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Lincolnshire
DN37 9EN

Dear Mrs Prestwood and Mrs Carn

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Great Coates Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 May 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 third 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 - satisfactory

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 third monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 May 2011

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the headteacher has been replaced by an interim headteacher for three days a week and an acting headteacher for two days a week. The acting headteacher is the deputy headteacher and the interim headteacher is an external appointment. The interim headteacher took up her post at the beginning of this term. Current, unavoidable uncertainty about long-term leadership arrangements, mean that the interim headteacher is expected to remain in post for the rest of this academic year. One teacher has left the school and a replacement has yet to be recruited. During the monitoring inspection, pupils in Year 6 were sitting their standard assessment tests.

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

School assessment information and pupils' work shows that progress continues to accelerate at a satisfactory pace in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress in reading is generally better than that in writing and mathematics. In some years, such as Years 2 and 4, pupils now make good progress in English and mathematics. Pupils' work in Year 6 demonstrates that overall attainment is at the expected level for their age. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff carry out regular assessments and are aware of the extent of children's skill development. However, insufficient attention is given to the progress children make to develop these skills over time. Consequently, the necessary information that would identify which children are making slower progress than they could is not available currently. An examination of the assessment information by the inspector indicated that children are making slower progress than they could be expected to make in developing reading and writing skills.

Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making better use of assessment information to match work to the ability of different groups of pupils. This is particularly the case in the good lessons. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 2, the more-able pupils relished the challenge of solving a complicated number investigation while those that are least-able were working independently on solving simpler number problems. In this lesson, these groups of pupils were well supported by a teaching assistant who used questioning skills well to challenge and support them. In other lessons, teachers are trying hard to use assessment

information to pitch work to the correct level for different groups, but there are a minority of pupils that find the work too hard or too easy. When this occurs, these pupils do not engage as well as they could with their work.

Pupils now have targets for English and mathematics. However, they are not as effective as they could be at guiding pupils on the next steps they need to take to improve their work because there are too many and they are too complicated. This makes it difficult for the pupils to know what their targets are and for the teachers to address them in the marking of work.

The quality of the pupils' writing continues to improve and attainment is now closer to that expected nationally. One reason for this is because the curriculum for writing enables pupils to practise a range of writing styles regularly.

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 – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils now make a much stronger contribution to the community both inside the school and in the local area. For example, during the monitoring inspection, members of the school council met with a local authority officer to carry out a risk assessment of the school trim-trail. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have made a real impact on the local community. Following a local litter-picking exercise they contacted the local council to request more bins and prompter collection of litter, which the council has discussed and agreed to address. Behaviour continues to improve in lessons, particularly in those lessons that are good, as pupils engage well with their learning. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils demonstrated well-developed skills of independence and cooperation when solving challenging problems.

The effectiveness of provision

Teachers demonstrate a determination to improve their teaching, which is developing at a satisfactory pace. However, some of the initiatives, such as improvements to marking and the use of assessment to pitch work to meet the needs of all pupils, are not yet applied as consistently as they could be by all teachers. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the rate of improvement in teaching is slower than in the rest of the school because school leaders have paid insufficient attention to the development of this provision.

While all teaching assistants work hard and try their best it is evident that some of them have not benefitted from the necessary training that would enable them to support learning as effectively as they could. There are some, however, such as the teaching assistants that support the learning in Year 3, who are highly effective.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following the unexpected departure of the headteacher at the beginning of March, the deputy headteacher, supported by the assistant headteacher has successfully ensured that the school continues to run smoothly and that provision and outcomes generally improve at a steady pace. The greatest improvement since the last monitoring inspection has been in the raised morale of staff. They now feel valued and part of a team that is determined to make improvements. However, leaders at all levels demonstrate that, though willing to learn, they currently lack the experience necessary to drive school improvement at the required pace. For example, monitoring activities such as the scrutiny of pupils' work, results in appropriate recommendations for improvements, but the steps taken to ensure these recommendations are implemented are not as effective as they could be, resulting in the inconsistencies in some aspects of the teaching. In recognition of this, the IEB and local authority have correctly appointed an interim headteacher with the necessary proven skills and expertise to develop leadership further and drive forward school improvement.

School leaders are now empowered to take the responsibility for aspects of the school improvement plan. This plan has improved since the previous monitoring inspection, but objectives and success criteria still lack a sharp focus on the impact of school improvement on the outcomes for pupils. One of the reasons for this is that the assessment procedures do not yet provide leaders and teachers with information about the progress of different groups so that trends and weaknesses can be identified. Pupil progress meetings now take place and teachers are much more effective at using assessment information to identify pupils that are making slower progress than they could. However, the assessment procedures do not yet show whether intervention activities for these pupils are successful in accelerating progress. Nor do they provide information to hold teachers to account for the progress of these pupils in lessons.

The IEB has been very effective in establishing a good plan for the return of governance to a school governing body. They demonstrate great expertise, particularly during the challenging period since the last monitoring inspection, ensuring that inexperienced leaders were able to successfully manage the school. The promotion of community cohesion is now carried out effectively. Pupils benefit from a range of enriching activities that are developing their understanding of contrasting communities well. School leaders have rightly identified that this area for improvement is no longer a priority.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on 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

Support from the local authority has been good. For example, the swift action taken to identify an interim headteacher and the support the school benefitted from that ensured it continued to make improvements. In addition, the IEB has benefitted from high quality guidance when establishing the plan to return governance to a school governing body.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen the leadership and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that all teaching assistants are well equipped to support learning.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels develop the necessary skills to check that recommendations for improvement are implemented consistently and successfully across the school.
- Improve assessment procedures so that:
 - the progress of different groups is tracked and weaknesses are identified
 - success criteria in the school development plan can be measured more accurately
 - the impact of additional learning activities to accelerate progress are measured
 - teachers can be better held to account for the progress of all pupils.