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11 March 2011

Mrs C Wain
Headteacher
Abingdon Primary School
Abingdon Road
Middlesbrough
North Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Wain

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Abingdon Primary School

Following my visit with Moira Fitzpatrick, additional inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 March 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 February 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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, Families and Learning for Middlesbrough.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

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

- Raise attainment and improve the progress pupils make in English, mathematics and science, by:
 - improving the management of teaching and learning by leaders at all levels so that teaching enables pupils to learn at a much faster and more consistent pace
 - making sure that planned learning activities meet the individual needs of all pupils
 - ensuring teachers make more effective use of day-to-day information about what pupils have learnt, in order to increase the pace of learning
 - making effective use of enrichment activities to develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning.
- Ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements.
- Improve attendance to at least the national average.

Special measures: monitoring of Abingdon Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection from 9 to 10 March 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 15 lessons. They scrutinised school documents including the school's safeguarding and child protection documentation and reviewed pupils' books. They met with the two headteachers, the Head of Learning 0-19 from the local authority, groups of senior and middle managers, pupils and representatives from the governing body's monitoring group.

Context

Since the last visit significant changes have taken place in the organisation and staffing of the school. Three members of staff retired in December and one teacher returned from maternity leave. Classes in Years 1, 2 and 5 have been restructured to create two classes in each year group with designated teaching assistants for each class. Year 6 pupils have been divided into three small classes and have recently moved into well-refurbished rooms. The role of teaching assistants has altered and all have new job descriptions and clearly identified responsibilities. The science curriculum has been completely redeveloped and resourced. Collaborative working between the two schools is extensive. The school has a new School Improvement Partner but he has yet to report formally to the governing body. The governing body has started to recruit a substantive headteacher to be in post by September 2011.

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

Lesson observations undertaken during the visit, scrutiny of pupils' work, school data on pupils' current achievements and outcomes from the regular lesson observations conducted by senior, middle leaders and staff show that pupils' progress in lessons has improved since the last visit. Virtually all pupils make at least the progress expected of them in their learning. Higher proportions are making good progress, although this has not had time to translate into improved end-of-year outcomes. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who find learning difficult are making similar progress to their peers in lessons because of the better teaching, effectively targeted help by adults, additional interventions and the strong support and care provided.

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

- Raise attainment and improve the progress pupils make in English, mathematics and science – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour remains good throughout the school. Relationships are often exemplary. Pupils report that they feel very safe and one spoke convincingly of how staff make them all feel special. Older pupils have a very good sense of the changes in the school. For example, they speak authoritatively on the difference good and outstanding lessons have made to their enjoyment and their learning. They are especially thrilled with the changes to the science curriculum which they say is no longer boring. Most pupils display much enthusiasm for learning in lessons and there are fewer occasions where pupils are passive and disinterested. The continued focus on improving attendance has resulted in good improvement in attendance since spring 2010 and a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. Attendance levels so far this year are average.

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

- Improve attendance to at least the national average – good

The effectiveness of provision

More pupils are making better progress in lessons because of the increasing proportion of good teaching, the virtual eradication of inadequate teaching and most teachers' better use of assessment information about pupils' current levels of ability. In good lessons, teachers set interesting and sometimes exciting tasks that move different groups quickly on in their learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed in such lessons; supporting identified groups and ensuring no time is wasted. Planning, the quality of teaching and the use of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage are consistently good. However, in the main school, a few teachers are still teaching whole-class lessons where virtually all pupils complete the same work despite their different abilities and the good, regular, pupil assessment information teachers hold. This limits opportunities for some, particularly the most able, to achieve their best. Issues also remain with the use of worksheets in a few classes and sometimes pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and hone their writing skills through regular, challenging activities that are demanding of their time and effort, particularly in Year 3. Leaders are continuing to take action to tackle this residual unevenness so that all teaching is at least good to tackle the previous underachievement fully.

Pupils' progress in science is improving rapidly because changes to the curriculum have resulted in a much greater focus on interesting and practical science in most classes and because of the good training and support from the partner school. A wide range of visitors to school, visits out of school and after-school activities continues to enrich the curriculum well. Leaders are constantly reviewing what is on offer to make sure there is something for everyone. For example, since the last visit they have introduced a wider range of clubs beyond the sporting, such as Expo Chef, Tudor and Victorian role-play experiences and visits to arts education galleries for hands-on experiences. The governing body has adopted a no charging policy to remove barriers further, which has increased the number

of pupils attending activities. The school's breakfast club is thriving, with increasing proportions benefiting from free breakfasts and the sociable and healthy start to the school day.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Improvements being developed in the autumn term have continued to gather pace because of leaders' relentless focus upon them. There is greater consistency in lesson planning, the quality of teaching, use of assessment to inform what pupils learn in lessons and in pupils' progress. Leaders are taking decisive action to remove the remaining inconsistencies through staff training, and development and performance management. Leadership of teaching and learning is extending well into middle management and teams. Middle managers say they are becoming increasingly empowered and are particularly delighted with their role in whole-school improvement rather than just in their subject responsibilities. Regular pupil performance meetings between senior and middle managers and staff are ensuring teachers' greater accountability for pupils' progress and the actions staff are taking to tackle underachievement. These meetings include scrutiny of pupils' progress over time; they do not yet include discussion on pupils' progress against their individual challenging targets. Consequently, opportunities are missed to check that pupils' current rates of progress will ensure they meet these targets.

Governance is improving well. There is strong evidence that governors are becoming increasingly accomplished at asking insightful and relevant questions of senior leaders. This is helping them to understand what is going well, what needs to improve further and to challenge what the school is doing to tackle areas that need to be better. The governing body has adopted a very rigorous approach to ensure safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and to build on the improvements that were quickly implemented following the last inspection. Good actions have been taken to identify pupils who may be at risk in any way. These pupils, alongside pupils who are subject to a child protection plan, are carefully nurtured, supported by all staff and monitored rigorously by the designated teacher for child protection.

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

- Ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements – good.

External support

The school continues to receive high quality external support from local authority specialist staff and from staff in their partner school. The local authority has rightly begun to take a step back as the school builds its own capacity and takes more responsibility for improvement from within its team of developing and generally highly motivated staff. The local authority action plan is reviewed and evaluated regularly to ensure its interventions and support can reduce to a normal entitlement within the planned timescales.