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24 June 2011

Miss Anna Grice
The Acting Headteacher
Thameside Primary School
Cotman Close
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 5NL

Dear Miss Grice

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Thameside Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 June 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 October 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate progress throughout the school, including for more-able pupils, this academic year by:
 - increasing the proportion of good teaching throughout the school
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently well by teachers to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' ages and abilities.
- Develop the effectiveness of the school's leaders this academic year by:
 - ensuring all staff with leadership roles have the skills to carry them out and fully understand their accountabilities
 - ensuring that whole-school assessment information is accurate and used more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils from their starting points and to set challenging targets
 - using monitoring of the quality of lessons more effectively to pinpoint accurately improvements required in teaching and learning.

Special measures: monitoring of Thameside Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 June 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visiting all classes, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, members of staff, pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority.

Context

The school is currently led by an acting headteacher, who was previously the school's assistant headteacher; a new headteacher has been appointed for September 2011. The Years 4 and 5 mixed-age class has had several changes of teacher this year; the class is currently being taught by a teacher on a temporary contract. The school will take an additional Early Years Foundation Stage class in September 2011.

The school continues to work in close partnership with another local primary school. Thameside's progress is monitored by a task group comprising the acting headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, local authority personnel and staff from the partner school.

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

Pupils were making at least satisfactory progress in all of the lessons visited during the inspection; in many cases they were making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Good systems are in place to collect and analyse data about pupils' achievement. Teachers' judgements about pupils' levels are based on a mixture of tests and teacher assessment, and are rigorously moderated to ensure that they are accurate. The school's data demonstrate that, in most years groups, pupils have made at least satisfactory progress this year. In some cases pupils have made good progress and, in a number of classes, progress has accelerated over the past term. However, pupils in Years 4 and 5 have not made enough progress. The school has taken a range of actions to improve these pupils' achievement, for example by introducing a mathematics intervention group. Year 4 and 5 pupils were making at least satisfactory, and sometimes good or outstanding, progress in the lessons visited during the inspection.

Data about pupils' achievement are analysed thoroughly to check the progress of different groups. This helps staff to identify trends in achievement, for example the fact that Year 1 girls are making better progress than Year 1 boys. It also clearly demonstrates that more-able pupils in all classes are now making much better progress.

Attainment is rising as pupils make better progress, but it is low in most year groups because pupils did not make enough progress when they were younger and have a lot of catching up to do. Pupils in Year 1 are, however, working at levels close to those seen nationally. Many pupils across the school have weaknesses in their speaking and listening skills, but lessons now provide better opportunities for pupils to develop these skills.

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

- raise pupils' attainment and accelerate progress throughout the school, including for more-able pupils – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour continues to improve and is now good in many lessons. There is less restless and inattentive behaviour than at the time of the last inspection. A new system has been introduced to help teachers to respond to minor classroom misbehaviour. This is being used effectively by teachers and has been well received by pupils. Attendance levels have increased significantly this year.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved. Inadequate teaching is now very rare and an increased proportion of teaching is good, or even outstanding. Lessons are planned in great detail and teachers are increasingly able to deliver these better plans successfully. Lessons more consistently provide appropriate activities for pupils of different abilities, helping to ensure that everyone is challenged more. The school has focused in particular on improving lessons for more-able pupils. This work has been very successful. These pupils are now more engaged and challenged by their lessons and they are achieving much more.

Teachers increasingly make competent use of a range of useful strategies and techniques, such as pupil talk partners and mini-whiteboards, in their lessons. They also typically provide pupils with more opportunities to work independently. This is all helping to make lessons more interesting and challenging for pupils.

A particular focus this term has been on the introduction of 'The Big Write'. This provides pupils with support to help them develop their writing skills; it involves pupils routinely writing at length. Although it is too early to measure the impact of this work on the quality of pupils' writing, it is already popular with pupils and is having a very positive impact on their attitudes to writing.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher continues to provide clear and effective leadership. She is rigorous and realistic in her assessment of the school's improvement and remaining

weaknesses. She recognises the need to set realistic priorities and focus on building the firm foundations of consistently good teaching. The school is now improving well. Parents and carers recognise and appreciate this improvement.

Monitoring involves a useful range of activities. The school increasingly provides specific and individualised support and training for teachers and teaching assistants. Useful work has also been carried out to develop the effectiveness of the governing body. Members have, for example, benefited from a range of training. The committee that focuses on pupil achievement provides valuable challenge in this area.

While there have been a number of useful developments, it has been more difficult for the school to develop the work of middle leaders. The school's stretched senior leadership capacity and the need for middle leaders to focus primarily on their own classes have limited opportunities for them to become more extensively involved in monitoring and the development of teaching.

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

- develop the effectiveness of the school's leaders – satisfactory.

External support

The school is very well supported. The local authority monitors developments closely and provides a range of useful support. Partnership work with the local school is very valuable; it involves a range of staff in a range of ways. Staff from the partner school have, for example, moderated the school's judgements about pupils' levels, provided training for teaching assistants and support for developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The partner headteacher has taken on a number of specific tasks and activities, enabling the acting headteacher to focus on the key priority of improving teaching and learning.