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Mrs Paula Martin
Headteacher
Ravensdale Junior School
Devonshire Drive
Mickleover
Derby
DE3 9EY

Dear Mrs Martin

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ravensdale Junior School

Following my visit with Thelma McIntosh-Clark, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11–12 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 21 May 2012. 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed only in consultation with HMI.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Derby City Council.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2012

- Improve teaching and raise attainment in writing and mathematics so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout their time at school by:
 - using pupils' current assessment information to plan lessons
 - matching work to pupils' differing abilities
 - maintaining a brisk pace in lessons
 - extending pupils' opportunities to write for longer periods across a range of subjects.

- Develop robust and effective management systems by:
 - incorporating measurable targets into the school development plan, including milestones to check progress, against which the senior management team and the governing body can gauge the school's progress
 - using pupils' assessment information effectively to evaluate the achievement of all groups of pupils and to target priorities
 - train senior and middle leaders to undertake a wider range of monitoring activities and to rigorously follow up points for development identified by them, particularly from lesson observations and data analysis
 - ensure that the governing body is given information about pupils' achievement which enables it to support and challenge the school, and link its monitoring to the school's main priorities.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11–12 December 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, the Chair, Vice-Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the time of the last inspection, a new Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body have been elected. There have been no other staffing changes.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The achievement of pupils is improving. Published information for the Year 6 pupils who left in the summer of 2012 shows that there were improvements to how well pupils achieve in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils made the progress that is expected of them, although the progress of those who joined the school with average ability was not as quick as it should have been. The majority of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also made average progress, but five pupils did not. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieved at least as well as those pupils nationally. The gap between these pupils and all pupils in the school is too wide, although it is narrowing.

In lessons, how well pupils learn ranges from outstanding to that which requires improvement. This variation is also shown in the data the school has about the progress pupils are making over time. This information shows that pupils, and particular groups of pupils, are not yet making the progress they should in all year groups. They are making the slowest progress in developing their writing skills. Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics is quicker, but not yet quick enough. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language are making the slowest progress in each year group. School leaders are revising the ways in which these individual pupils are supported to make sure that their needs are met more effectively. The oldest pupils in the school are on track to make average progress in each of reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave school and their current levels of skills are better than was the case for the previous Year 6 pupils.

The quality of teaching

There remains too much teaching that requires improvement and this is preventing pupils from making good progress over time. However, the school's own evidence and that of this inspection confirm that the quality of teaching that pupils experience

on a day-to-day basis is improving. Inspectors observed teaching that was outstanding, good and requires improvement. There was no inadequate teaching observed.

Features of weaker teaching continue to include when teachers have not taken into account how much pupils already know and the skills they already have. This means that pupils of differing abilities are not being fully supported to learn quickly. Teachers now have more information about the levels of ability of individual students, and school leaders have revised their expectations of how teachers will plan lessons to take account of this information. This has not yet had sufficient time to make a consistent difference. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long, preventing pupils from getting on with their learning. In other lessons, activities are given too much time and this means pupils either lose interest or are waiting for what they need to do next. Most teachers are using a range of ways to check how well pupils understand what they are learning. However, sometimes teachers do not use the information they get, for example from pupils putting their thumbs up or down, to then make changes to the lesson they have planned.

The strengths in teaching include lesson objectives that make clear to pupils what they are going to be learning and why the skills they are developing are relevant. For example, outstanding teaching in a Year 6 mathematics lessons helped pupils to make links to why it is important to understand how to calculate the area of a shape. In other lessons, teachers had planned to include a range of interesting activities which involved pupils in their learning; for example, in a history lesson, where pupils researched aspects of the Spanish Armada. In the best lessons, there is no learning time wasted and teachers encourage a sense of urgency in such a way that the pupils are excited and enthused. This was clear in a religious education lesson, where Year 3 pupils made very quick progress in their understanding of the Christingle symbols as a result of outstanding teaching. Teaching assistants often make a good contribution to the quality of teaching. They do so by having the skills and knowledge to help pupils understand, for example, mathematical calculations, and to help disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to develop their confidence in being independent. The most effective teaching also makes sure that pupils know what they need to do to improve as a result of good quality marking.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In the lessons observed, pupils had good attitudes to learning and there were excellent relationships between pupils and with teachers and teaching assistants. Most pupils work well when not under the direct control of teachers and, in some lessons, this made an outstanding contribution to how quickly they were learning.

Pupils' conduct around the site is also good. They show respect for each other and their environment and take care to clean up after themselves in the dining hall. The

positive atmosphere in classes and at break and lunchtimes helps pupils to feel safe. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown in their above-average levels of attendance.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and other senior leaders have made clear their expectations of what pupil progress and the quality of teaching should be. Both of these are linked directly to the management of teachers' performance. Staff overwhelmingly accept and support this. A good action plan has been written that makes clear what needs to be achieved, with appropriate timescales and methods to check that the school's work is making a difference. An important improvement has been the way in which senior leaders are able to track the progress that pupils and particular groups of pupils are making in each year group. This means that they know which aspects of the pupils' learning, for example in developing writing skills, need to be improving more quickly.

More regular checking of the quality of teaching is now taking place. Leaders are taking into account an increasing range of evidence, including looking at pupils' work and how well pupils are making progress over time, when they are making their judgements about the quality of teaching. The leaders of English and mathematics are also involved in these activities and have begun to give to teachers extra training and support where necessary. This training and support is beginning to make an obvious difference. This is seen, for example, in the improving quality of marking and the ways in which teachers are planning lessons to make sure that pupils have more opportunities to get involved. Approaches to improving pupils' writing skills are also beginning to make a difference, but there is still much work to do.

Members of the governing body continue to be supportive of the headteacher and other senior leaders and have an increasingly good working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know which aspects of pupils' achievement need to improve and ask relevant questions of the headteacher about what is being done to address this. Governors have attended a conference and received training. These have increased their understanding of nationally produced data on pupils' achievement and other aspects such as how best to spend the additional funding the school receives to support the potentially most disadvantaged pupils. The full governing body now meets monthly and the Chair prepares a report after her regular formal meetings with the headteacher, which is then discussed and challenged by other governors. At the governing body's most recent meeting, governors suggested that they should write their own action plan and inspectors agree that this is a good and necessary next step. The minutes of governing body meetings are beginning to record how governors are challenging the school and holding the headteacher to account, but they are not yet sufficiently clear on this.

External support

Good-quality support from the local authority has enabled school leaders, including governors, to become more effective in analysing the data available on pupils' achievement and to then use this information to plan how to provide support to those pupils who need it. The headteacher has also used the local authority to assist in her quality assurance of judgements made on the quality of teaching and these judgements are accurate. The work of the school's special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) has developed as a result of support from a local authority officer and working with colleagues from neighbouring schools. There has been a revision to how pupils with special educational needs are identified and the SENCOs have a good overview of how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are achieving.