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19 June 2014

Mr J Reid/Mr J Sharp
Co-headteachers
Normanton Junior School
Church Lane
Normanton
West Yorkshire
WF6 1EY

Dear Mr Reid/Mr J Sharp

Special measures monitoring inspection of Normanton Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 17 and 18 June 2014 with Joan Williamson, associate headteacher, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2013. 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 to towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint three newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection, but only to a year group team where there is consistently good teaching. They must be mentored by the deputy headteacher in the autumn term.

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 Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013.

■ **Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in order to raise pupils' attainment, particularly in writing, by making sure that:**

- work given to pupils always matches their varying needs and abilities and that all groups of pupils are effectively challenged, particularly the more able
- all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are clear about what is expected of them so that they can reach their potential
- teachers' marking always gives pupils clear and specific information about how to improve their writing skills
- teachers give pupils more opportunities to improve their writing
- teachers make sure that pupils have the chance to become actively involved in lessons and to complete tasks on their own. This is to help them maintain concentration and interest
- teachers insist that pupils produce writing to the highest standards of which they are capable and that they always present their work well.

■ **Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:**

- developing the skills of senior leaders and extending the role of subject leader to more staff so that there is a shared approach to evaluating the school's performance, improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement
- making sure that school improvement plans focus clearly and precisely on how the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement will be improved
- ensuring that plans made for developing pupils' skills do not mean that pupils repeat what they already know and can do as they move through the school
- undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
- providing the necessary training to develop the roles and skills of governors so that they are fully involved in driving improvement and know exactly how to hold the school to account
- making sure arrangements for managing the performance of staff are fully in place so that staff are held to account for pupils' achievement and are well supported in bringing about improvement.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher designate, senior leaders, staff, pupils, parents, the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection a Year 5 teacher has left and a temporary teacher appointed for the summer term. The two interim co-headteachers have continued to lead and manage the school; one is to continue full time until December. Despite advertising twice, the interim executive board has been unable to appoint a substantive headteacher, however, a deputy headteacher has been appointed for September. The school is set to lose half its teaching staff, some of whom are middle leaders, by the end of this term. It is working with the local authority to secure the appointment of good, experienced teachers. It is in the process of appointing two newly qualified teachers with the agreement of the monitoring inspector.

The local authority has explored a local option for the management of the school but this has not come to fruition. It is in discussion with a new, independent multi-academy trust with a view to the school becoming part of this on 1 January 2015.

An interim executive board is still operating.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Actions to address underachievement are starting to bear fruit, with all year groups on a trajectory to make better progress than that seen previously, notably so in writing. However, there is still a long way to go to make sure all pupils make the progress expected from their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Nevertheless, it is an improving picture with increasingly more pupils making better than expected progress, especially in the first half of the summer term. Despite this improving trend, gaps in achievement remain. The progress of those pupils supported by the pupil premium funding and lower ability pupils, including those who have special educational needs is not yet as good as it needs to be. For some, the gaps are widening. The school must take urgent action to address this. In addition, teachers' expectations need to be higher to ensure the most able pupils, particularly those in Years 3 and 4, achieve the standard they are capable of.

A much higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 are making expected progress and a significantly higher proportion making better than expected progress in reading,

writing and mathematics than previously but, this is still below the national average for 2013. It is a clear indicator of the level of underachievement that has needed to be addressed. In April, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics combined is significantly below the floor target. However, there are indications that recent improvements in writing will increase this.

In the writing lessons seen, pupils made better progress because, teachers are much clearer about what they need to teach and how. Pupils' oral and written responses, when describing, explaining and using language features, indicate that there has been prior effective teaching. This is now impacting on pupils' knowledge and understanding and subsequently, their progress. There is evidence in pupils' work to show that there is better progression in writing, but this is still inconsistent across the school and within year groups. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply what they have learned to longer pieces of writing and some teachers' expectations are still not as high as they need to be, to ensure that all pupils achieve the highest standards possible. Better marking and feedback is contributing to the raising of achievement, but again there are inconsistencies. There is clear evidence to show that where teaching is stronger and where marking and feedback is used effectively, pupils are making progress at a faster rate. Standards of presentation are improving. This is not as good in some classes as in others.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. During visits to lessons, effective teaching was seen in all lessons observed. Teachers engaged pupils and ensured progress within the lesson, because of the strategies they employed. These included questioning to deepen thinking and giving pupils an opportunity to discuss ideas so that they are better able to reason and explain. Tasks were purposeful and better matched to pupils' abilities and needs. For instance, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils explored how to create tension in the climax of a story. When questioned, they fully understood the language features that authors used to create tension and were able to describe these and give examples using subject-related vocabulary. There were clear expectations for each ability group. Pupils say lessons have got harder and they can see their skills improving.

Work scrutiny in mathematics indicates that there is more effective teaching over time than previously. Consequently, pupils are making better progress. There is greater productivity and pride in work and increasing opportunities to use and apply what they have learned. However, work scrutiny in English, especially writing, did not show as positive a picture. In some classes, the learning intention was unclear and teachers did not mark against this, so pupils would know how well they were doing. Productivity is not as good as it needs to be. Timing within lessons may be a factor within this, given that teachers are using time to focus on basic skills and in some cases, review previous learning. There are indications that teachers can teach well but, not consistently so, to ensure all pupils make at least good progress from

their low starting points at the start of the academic year. Where teachers have received support, teaching has improved but, for some, this improvement is not always sustained. More teachers have raised their expectation of what pupils can do, but this can be variable from lesson to lesson. In some cases, productivity and the quality of pupils' work is not as good as it needs to be. This indicates that some teachers' expectations are still not high enough.

Improvement in the way teachers plan and teach to meet the varying needs of pupils is ensuring better progression in learning and is engaging all pupils. Leaders agree there is still work to be done to ensure the needs of the least able, including those who have special educational needs and the most able are better met. However, recent actions are beginning to bear fruit for these groups, particularly for those who have special educational needs.

Marking and feedback is much improved and there is now greater consistency. In some classes, teachers' feedback is clearly helping pupils to progress because, they are given time to address errors, improve their work and increasingly undertake challenges set. However, not all teachers adhere to this policy as well or, as consistently as they need to, to ensure this supports pupils' progress effectively. Some teachers do not model handwriting as well as they need to or check and give pupils the opportunity to improve handwriting.

Significant improvement has been made in how teachers organise and present classroom environments to support pupils' learning. Pupils make effective use of working walls in mathematics and English and they say these help them with their work when they are 'stuck'. Older pupils are much clearer about their targets and next steps in learning, because these are displayed and referred to. Some classes use individual target cards, which pupils were seen using effectively in lessons. Younger pupils are less clear about their targets and what they need to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improvements in teaching are securing better attitudes to learning and pupils are clearly more attentive and engaged as a result of this. The behaviour policy is supporting this and the use of house-points is ensuring that pupils work well together to achieve the best for their house. A small minority of pupils are continuing to cause significant disruption to learning and in some instances pose a danger to other pupils and staff. The two co-headteachers are proactive in supporting staff to deal with these pupils and take appropriate action when necessary to safeguard these pupils, others and staff.

Pupils say school is a very happy and safe place to be and they love coming each day. Year 6 playground buddies are supporting staff to ensure pupils have a positive experience at playtimes.

Attendance is similar to attendance this time last year, which was average. The work of the learning mentor, alongside improved systems and procedures, is improving the attendance of individuals.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The co-headteachers have been effective in driving forward the improvements needed. Systems and procedures are more embedded and understood, as are the high expectations they have set. The rigorous checks they make and subsequent actions are leading no hiding place for staff who are not improving their teaching at the pace and to the level expected. Performance management procedures are holding teachers and leaders to account much more robustly than previously. The school's recent self-evaluation is accurate.

Actions to improve teaching are ensuring greater consistency of practice across the school. This is impacting on pupils' progress and attitudes to learning and ensuring more pupils are gaining ground than seen previously. Nevertheless, there is still much to do to make sure that all pupils make at least expected progress and that the gaps in achievement for the least able, including those who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding, are closed.

Leaders responded promptly after the last monitoring visit to address the issue of the weak curriculum in English and mathematics. As a result of this, staff have a clearer and more progressive framework from which to plan lessons. This is ensuring better breadth and balance in writing and is starting to bear fruit in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. This is underpinning the rise in standards over the last half term.

Leadership has been strengthened through the development and work of the English and mathematics leads. They are starting to impact on standards of teaching and learning through the work they are doing. For instance, they have taken a lead in developing 'working walls' which show the pupils' journey in learning and provide a useful reference for later work. These are used consistently across classes and pupils were seen using them effectively to support their writing during visits to lessons. However, these leaders are not yet working to their full potential as assistant headteachers, which has resulted in the co-headteachers still carrying the burden of senior leadership.

Middle leadership is developing and the special needs coordinator has taken action to address the underachievement of this group of pupils. The introduction of a new tracking and assessment system is ensuring the needs of these pupils are met more fully in lessons and through targeted interventions.

The professionalism and expertise of the interim executive board has helped to increase the capacity of the strategic leadership within the school. It has been

rigorous in holding leaders and teachers to account. It has an accurate view of where the school is at and makes robust checks on how well the school is doing. For instance, its recent review of the progress made by those pupils supported by the pupil premium funding showed that the gap is widening, as other pupils accelerate their progress. It has challenged leaders to take action to close the gap in achievement for this group of pupils. Positive relationships with parents have been forged and the board meets regularly with the parent's forum and ensures there is good communication about changes within the school. The plans started to develop a governing body have been put on hold while the local authority looks further for a solution to the leadership and management of the school.

The board has advertised twice for a suitable headteacher but has been unable to appoint. This means that one of the co-headteachers is to stay at the school until December. It is hoped that the option of joining a multi academy trust will help to secure a permanent headteacher, but this is still in the early stages of discussion. A deputy headteacher has been appointed for September and this will help to increase the school's leadership capacity.

Leaders recognise that despite the improvements made, the school remains vulnerable because there is no substantive headteacher in post, no governing body and half of the teaching staff will have left by the end of term. The local authority is working with the school to secure 'good' appointments and the school has permission to appoint two newly qualified teachers with provisos to ensure they get the support they are entitled to.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support through the work of the School Improvement Adviser and consultants. This has supported the improvements in leadership and teaching. Conversely, the support to help the school address the behaviour of a small group of pupils causing significant disruption and damage is inadequate. Plans have not been followed through and recent assurances to support the school from September are much too late. The quality and effectiveness of this support has been an issue since the first monitoring inspection in October last year.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school needs to review its use of pupil premium as a matter of urgency to ensure that is used effectively to close the gaps in achievement.
- The local authority must take immediate action to support the school to better manage the behaviour and well-being of the small minority of pupils who are displaying extremely poor and worrying behaviour in school.