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19 November 2008  
Mrs Margaret Moyles  
Headteacher  
Allerton Bywater Primary School  
Leeds Road  
Allerton Bywater  
Castleford  
West Yorkshire  
WF10 2DR

Dear Mrs Moyles

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Allerton Bywater Primary School

Following my visit with Les Schubeler, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Peter Toft  
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Allerton Bywater Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 November, 2008.

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 18 lessons and two assemblies, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle managers, the pupil resource manager, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and 'parents' champion', and a representative from the local authority (LA).

## Context

Since the inspection in May 2008, the associate headteacher has returned to her former position of deputy headteacher. An experienced interim headteacher has been appointed, with the help of the LA, to steer the school's improvement. The assistant headteacher has left due to promotion and another teacher has been temporarily promoted to fill this position. Apart from the interim headteacher, all staff are permanently employed here. The school is about to conduct interviews for the appointment of a permanent headteacher, after which the recent review and improvement of the school's management structure is to be completed. The governing body has been supported by two experienced governors nominated by the LA. The authority is also contributing to a Joint Review Group with governors, managers and consultants, to support and monitor the school's improvement.

## Achievement and standards

Provisional results in the national tests at Key Stage 2 in 2008, which were taken just after the last inspection, confirmed that standards are well below average in both English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is improving and this is beginning to raise standards. However, not enough time has yet elapsed to provide hard evidence that the school has overcome its legacy of low standards and poor achievement. There are promising signs that teachers are beginning to use assessment data to plan work that is more closely matched to the needs of individual pupils. Progress in lessons is now at least satisfactory and often good, but more time is needed to ensure that this better progress is consistently established throughout the school in order to raise standards more rapidly.

Senior leaders have introduced measures to identify and redress underachievement. Procedures for tracking and monitoring of individual pupils' progress, for example, have been developed. A more structured approach to the teaching of pupils' writing skills has been implemented, with assessments made regularly at the end of each unit of work. In addition, steps have been taken to make lesson planning more consistent and rigorous. Intervention sessions have been introduced in which teaching assistants support pupils identified as underachieving. Although such

measures have clearly improved teaching and learning, it is too early to see a firm impact on standards.

Progress on the area for improvement since the last inspection in May 2008:

- Raise standards and accelerate progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in writing – satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good throughout the school. Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils say bullying is very rare and that they feel safe and secure whilst on the premises. The atmosphere created by the staff is calm and purposeful and the pupils respond by concentrating well in lessons. They enjoy being at school and find most lessons interesting, though at times their enjoyment wavers when they are set work which is too easy or too difficult. Attendance is above average and the school works hard to encourage this. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to exercise and eat healthily. Pupils respond well to the opportunities they are given to take responsibility, whether in keeping classrooms well organised, improving the school environment or, for older pupils, having formal roles to help the younger pupils during break times. The school makes effective use of rewards to encourage hard work and good behaviour and these are popular with the pupils. Regular and well organised assemblies cover a wide range of interesting issues, some of which help pupils to think about spiritual and moral issues.

### Quality of provision

The monitoring of pupils' progress has become more structured. Staff have had training to improve their assessment of pupils' work in order to track progress and identify and tackle underachievement early. Support from the LA has helped teachers to make better use of level descriptors to identify the standards pupils are reaching. This additional support is helping teachers to set targets for pupils and to show them clearly what they need to do to improve their work. New assessment procedures are now providing useful information about pupils' progress and achievement. However, this information is not consistently used and some pupils remain insufficiently clear about how to improve their work.

Support staff have been trained in delivering intervention programmes for pupils identified as underachieving. These programmes have only recently been introduced and their effectiveness cannot yet be measured. Staff will need continuing managerial support and guidance, as well as time to become familiar with the procedures, to embed the consistent use of assessment in planning pupils' work.

The school has successfully improved the overall quality of teaching. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) remains good. Lessons throughout the school are taught enthusiastically. They generally engage the interest of pupils. Behaviour is very good in lessons. Most pupils make satisfactory or good progress in lessons. However, the assessment of pupils' work to identify what specific individuals need to do to improve their work is not fully embedded across the whole school. Consequently, pupils do not all make the more rapid progress that is necessary to enable them to achieve as well as they should.

In many lessons, pupils enjoy learning, work hard and want to do well. These positive attitudes reflect continuing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Secure relationships support learning in lessons. Teachers use a common framework for planning and teaching their lessons. In the most effective lessons, clearly differentiated activities result in most pupils learning effectively. Pupils are actively involved in most lessons. There is a growing trend for teachers to provide activities that challenge the most able pupils, although this is not evident in all lessons. Learning is enhanced by appropriate and well utilized resources and the good contribution made by teaching assistants. Time is well used. Learning intentions and success criteria are now regularly shared with pupils and this helps to keep them focused, but the school acknowledges that more needs to be done to ensure consistency across the school. Teachers regularly check pupils' progress and some are beginning to use this information to set targets for improvement. Good practice was observed in the marking of pupils' work. Teachers give pupils constructive guidance on how to improve their work. This advice is enabling some pupils to become more confident about assessing their own strengths and weaknesses.

Progress on the area for improvement since the last inspection in May 2008:

- Rigorously monitor pupils' progress in order quickly to identify and eradicate underachievement – satisfactory.
- Ensure teachers use assessment information more effectively to make sure that work is precisely matched to pupils' needs and provides effective challenge for all pupils including the most able – satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

The interim headteacher has made significant improvements to the school's leadership and management. The management structure has been rationalised. Each major area of the school's work now has a nominated manager or coordinator. The new structure is fit for purpose, pending the intended appointment of a permanent headteacher. The senior managers have a clear view of their responsibilities and carry them out effectively, with the strong support of the interim headteacher. Middle managers range from those with well established positions to those, such as the coordinators for English and mathematics, who have recently been given additional responsibility. The latter now need time and further training to develop

their roles and teams to the full, for example, in monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching in their subjects throughout the school. The school's evaluation of its performance, and the use of assessment data to support this, has improved significantly since the inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants have job descriptions which make clear their responsibilities and help senior staff carry out effective performance management. Most of the non-teaching staff also have such job descriptions. Much effort has been put into strengthening the managerial skills of staff and their understanding of how their work fits into the overall work of the school. As a result, staff morale is high and the spirit of team work is palpable throughout the school. The school's environment has been improved and now provides a good atmosphere for learning.

Improvement has been guided by a very clear action plan with pertinent objectives. The interim headteacher has discussed the plan frequently with staff to ensure that all contribute to its refinement, understand what needs to be achieved and how, and also to ensure that improvement continues steadily over time. Combined with additional training, this is helping to build the capacity of the staff to improve and manage their work. Improvement has been substantial and much has become embedded in school routines. The governors recognise, however, that effectiveness over the long-term will be more readily secured once a permanent headteacher is in post. They are working well with specialists from the LA to bring this about.

Governance has become more sharply focused, with clearer terms of reference. Sub-committees now operate to ensure that detailed aspects of governance are given full consideration before being confirmed by the whole governing body. Governors have an accurate picture of how well the school is performing. This has been aided considerably by the LA, largely through the two governors they have nominated to join the governing body temporarily. The chair of governors is well aware that the governing body as a whole will need to continue to develop the skills necessary to operate as effectively as it currently does once the LA's temporary support comes to an end.

Progress on the area for improvement since the last inspection in May 2008:

- Ensure that management roles and responsibilities are more equitable and that middle managers are empowered to make a full contribution to leading and managing the school – satisfactory

### External support

The LA has provided good, authoritative support to the school through the appointment of a very effective interim headteacher and a range of targeted assistance. The school's efforts to improve have been strengthened considerably by this support. The initial statement of action was well targeted on the school's needs as identified in the inspection and it has been effective in guiding the authority's support. The Joint Review Group, supported by the LA, has been very effective in helping to identify needs and monitor progress and in channelling support to the school. Specialist training has been provided by the LA. This has, for example,

helped the interim headteacher to enable the staff to improve the methods of assessing attainment, tracking progress and using assessment information to refine the planning of teaching. The work of the governing body has been more sharply focused on the performance of the school. This has been helped by the contributions made by the two new governors nominated by the authority for their expertise in governance. Whilst governance has improved in recent months, continuing governor training is needed, especially to help the new sub-committees develop their detailed work with authority. The reports provided by the school improvement partner have helped the school to clarify its thinking about pupils' attainment and what needs to be improved.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Identify the governing body's training needs in supporting and monitoring school improvement, and secure assistance from the LA to meet these needs.
- Provide further support for the coordinators of the core subjects to enable them to develop their roles to the full.
- Strengthen further the effectiveness of teaching by supporting teachers to develop practice to the high levels existing in some of the lessons.
- Embed fully the recently improved assessment and tracking procedures to strengthen teaching and sharpen planning for differentiation.