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26 March 2009

Mrs M Moyles
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Moyles

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Allerton Bywater Primary School

Following my visit with Naila Zaffar, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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 – 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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Peter Toft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Allerton Bywater Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 24–25 March, 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 14 lessons and an assembly, scrutinised documents and met with interim headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, teachers and teaching assistants, two governors, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher designate.

Context

Since the last inspection in November 2008, the interim headteacher has led the school, with the continuing support of the local authority. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up his post at the start of the summer term 2009, at which point the interim headteacher will leave. The Reception class teacher has left for promotion elsewhere and has been replaced temporarily by an experienced class teacher. The school intends to review the staffing and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage next term before making a permanent appointment in this area. The class for pupils in Years 3 and 4 is currently being taught by a supply teacher in the absence of the permanent class teacher. The governing body has strengthened its role by developing a committee structure. The local authority continues to contribute to a joint review group with governors, managers and consultants to support and monitor the school's improvement.

Achievement and standards

The school has developed a very clear picture of the performance of pupils and their progress. A very effective tracking system is now clearly showing each child's progress. All of the staff observed are now clear about standards and progress in their classes. This is well supported by regular 'pupil progress meetings' attended by teachers, teaching assistants, and managers.

A number of effective steps have been taken to raise standards and tackle a legacy of underachievement. The early identification of pupils who are underachieving and the use of a variety of strategies to tackle concerns are meeting with some success. Some vulnerable pupils in Key Stage 1, for example, have already reached their end-of-year targets. In Key Stage 2, standards have also improved but they remain too low in writing in Year 6.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave very well around the building and outside. In most of the lessons seen behaviour was excellent, especially in response to the lively and rigorous teaching and ample opportunities to engage in stimulating activities. Behaviour occasionally falls a little below this level in a small number of lessons where, though control is effective and teaching adequate, there is a lack of vibrancy and challenge. There have been no exclusions in the last year and the school has excellent procedures to deal with any misbehaviour. The vast majority of children thoroughly enjoy their time in school. Pupils report that bullying is very rare and is quickly dealt with when it does occur. Managers and staff are highly effective in providing a secure and well controlled atmosphere in which all children are expected to try their hardest to succeed, and where effort is duly rewarded. This is much appreciated by the pupils spoken to during the visit, who believe that the school is a very safe place in which to learn. They are keen to point out how helpful the staff are in enabling them to learn. This applies to pupils of all abilities and the school deploys its teaching assistants well to enable them, for example, to support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who need to speed up their rate of progress. Attendance is above average, reflecting the pupils' high degree of motivation. The building is attractive and well maintained, and is carefully managed to promote the health and safety of pupils. This is aided by clear and consistent routines for the management of classrooms and movement in and around the school. Displays are attractive and much used by staff and pupils to support learning. Pupils have ample opportunities to take responsibility, ranging from keeping classrooms tidy to helping the governors appoint new staff. Members of the school council are very proud of the role they played in the recent interviewing of candidates for the school's headship. Overall, the school gives pupils good support to foster their social development and this, together with the rising academic standards and improving basic skills, is now beginning to give pupils a firm basis from which to promote their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last monitoring visit. Half the teaching observed was outstanding, most was good and none was inadequate. This now enables pupils to make good progress during lessons. However, the legacy of past underachievement means that pupils do not all make the progress they should. Rigorous monitoring and tracking have resulted in precise planning to meet the need of all individuals through appropriate differentiation in lessons. There is excellent rapport between pupils and staff, and between pupils, in most classes. Discussions, for example, during literacy lessons showed developing insight into concepts such as rhythm, pace, dramatic pause and accent. Pupils listen to each other with an impressive degree of interest and respect. Standards in such lessons are high, influenced by the rigour of planning, effectiveness of class control and the clear leadership given by teachers. Skilful questioning draws all pupils into

discussion, giving pupils time to express ideas and converse spontaneously with their 'talking partners'. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach with enthusiasm and confidence. Learning objectives and success criteria are shared with pupils. A wide range of well resourced activities support this good quality of provision. The intervention strategies are coordinated, monitored and supported very well by the strategies manager. Interventions are then carried out by trained and enthusiastic teaching assistants who keep an accurate record of pupils' progress. Assessment information shows clearly that pupils pace of learning has accelerated in the short time they have received this enhanced support. Regular meetings with the leadership team on pupils' progress or underachievement inform the planning of teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils in Year 2 talk confidently about what they need to do to move up a level. All but one class have 'working wall' displays with curricular targets shown in language the pupils can understand. Assessment for learning is showing pupils how to improve their work, although in one class pupils' work is not marked consistently.

Teachers' assessments inform future planning. Lesson planning is systematic in all but one class and clearly identifies aims, content, teaching and assessment methods, pupils' activities and the roles of all adults in meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities. Lessons and their plans are evaluated before the next activities are planned. In most classes, pupils' books are marked with reference to their targets and constructive feedback is given to help them improve, although this is underdeveloped in one class.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision remains good, in both indoor and outdoor activities. Pupil profiles are kept up to date with observations photographs and evidence of work. However, there is no evidence of parental contributions to these profiles as yet. Family literacy is being developed in association with some parents of Reception class pupils. Eight parents every year take part in weekly guided activities with their children/grandchildren for 26 weeks. They develop skills and confidence to support their children at home. Another successful initiative has been the sharing with parents of information about pupils' progress towards their targets. Parents are very positive about this and they would like more information on National Curriculum levels and regular feedback on achievements therein.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Rigorously monitor pupils' progress in order to quickly identify and eradicate underachievement – good.
- 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 – good.

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher has made an excellent contribution to the improvement of leadership and management during her six month tour of duty. Subject leaders and other middle leaders are now crystal clear about their responsibilities and have the strong and supportive backing of senior leaders to carry them out. They do so very effectively and middle management is now a strength of the school. This has entailed well managed changes to the staffing structure and an effective programme of staff development. Middle leaders make very effective use of the school's rich bank of data on the performance and progress of pupils. They are beginning to use this information to determine how well, for example, pupils are progressing in particular core subjects in particular year groups. This is enabling the school to identify gaps in coverage which have existed in the past and which are now steadily being filled by carefully focused planning. Training has been received from the local authority in the evaluation of lessons and core subject leaders are developing good skills to evaluate provision in their subjects. Overall, subject coordinators now carry significant responsibility for developing, managing and evaluating their subjects throughout the school. This contrasts strikingly with their previous roles which were largely restricted to the management of learning resources. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also now managed very effectively. This is supported by a good supply of assessment data on pupils' performance, regular staff meetings to gauge progress, and a tightly structured programme of interventions with particular pupils. The school now has good systems and procedures for management at all levels. This has improved efficiency, reduced the time-consuming need to be reactive to events and has given leaders the time to think clearly and anticipate as they carry out their management duties.

Planning for improvement has been highly effective in enabling the school to make good progress in dealing with the issues raised in the inspection of May 2008. Staff have been deeply involved in this planning. They are very committed to improvement and to working cooperatively. Staff morale is high and there is a palpable sense of belonging to an increasingly effective organisation. Staff training has been considerable and carefully selected to meet the needs of the school and the staff, and the training has had good impact on teaching and, increasingly, on the progress made by pupils. A good series of induction events for the headteacher designate has been set up by the local authority, and he has already had experience of observing the work of the school's various development groups as well as the operation of the school. Time is now needed for the new headteacher to embed and develop further the significant improvements initiated by the interim headteacher.

Governors have rationalised the committee structure of the governing body and this is beginning to show in the detail and quality of their decision making. Training and mentoring have been set up but time is needed for this to have an impact on the capabilities of individual governors. The role played by the governing body in appointing the new headteacher was substantial and effective.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 – good.

External support

The local authority has provided highly effective and sustained support to the school. This has included: a wide range of practical advice and guidance given by consultants and advanced skills teachers on teaching and assessment methods, which has been instrumental in helping staff to modernise their classroom practice; support to improve provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; continuing support to the interim headteacher in her work to improve leadership, management, teaching, assessment and the curriculum throughout the school; guidance to the governing body which has helped it to strengthen its working practices and capability to question the staff about the school's performance; and assistance to the governors in securing the appointment of, and induction arrangements for, the new headteacher. The joint review group continues to be effective in keeping track of progress, formulating development needs and helping to secure external support. It has been well managed by governors. It receives, from the interim headteacher and the local authority, high quality professional advice on the school's performance and progress. Governor training provided by the local authority has helped governors to focus sharply on important matters within their sub-committee meetings. The reports provided by the school improvement partner have continued to help the senior staff to clarify its thinking about areas which need further improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards overall, and also in the quality of writing in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure consistency of provision in classes throughout the school.
- Ensure that the arrangements to induct the new headteacher contribute effectively to a seamless transition from the leadership of the interim headteacher.