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10 March 2009

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 Geof Timms and Roger Brown, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 2 and 3 March 2009, 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 October 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 Corporate Director for Children and Young People for Derby City.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Ravensdale Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 2 and 3 March 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, analysed pupils' work and talked with pupils. They also met with the headteacher, a number of staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been no substantive changes to the school's staffing. At the time of the monitoring visit, one teacher was on maternity leave with a temporary teacher covering her post. Two teachers were absent through illness.

## Achievement and standards

Progress across the school remains inadequate overall from pupils' starting points on joining the school. Consideration of the school's data from their latest progress check indicates that standards and progress in all subjects are still variable and mostly below expectations, particularly in writing. The inconsistencies evident in pupils' progress remain largely due to continued inconsistencies in teaching and learning and partly because all teachers are not yet confident in using assessment procedures.

The school's own collection of monitoring data is not yet extensive but the overall picture currently portrays some slowing of progress in the upper part of the school, particularly for those pupils who are capable of achieving the higher levels. One issue currently being tackled is that several teachers are not yet confident in their assessments, especially when assessing at the higher levels. In the 2008 Key Stage 2 results this was clearly evident - teachers were accurate in their teacher assessments of Level 4 achievement, as validated in the subsequent test results, but underestimated the number of pupils achieving Level 5, particularly in English. The school is aware of this and there is a continued drive to improve both the accuracy of assessment and teachers' confidence in routinely using this information to plan learning.

Lesson observations during the monitoring visit indicated that at least satisfactory progress is currently being maintained in the lower years. It slows at times in Years 5 and 6, where there is a lack of challenge and ambition evident in some of the teaching.

Progress on the area for improvement identified in the inspection in October 2008

- Raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school  
- inadequate

### Quality of provision

Although there is evidence of some improvements arising from the school's efforts, together with local authority interventions, to raise the quality of teaching across the school, the overall picture of teaching and learning is still too variable to make a real impact on standards and progress. A significant number of lessons were observed during the monitoring visit. A wide range of teaching was seen, from outstanding to a small number of inadequate lessons.

Some features have improved since the inspection, including the level of active engagement of pupils, with fewer instances of passive learning. The deployment and use of teaching assistants has also improved and these are now much better placed to support learning in lessons. Relationships with pupils are consistently good and the vast majority of pupils in all year groups work with enthusiasm and participate well, particularly when suitably challenged.

The most effective lessons are well planned in some detail, well organised and structured, with clear differentiation in order to meet the needs of a range of abilities, including extension activities and include varied, interesting activities that engage and inspire pupils. However, the level of challenge provided across classes is inconsistent. Less successful lessons are not routinely planned thoughtfully enough and the activities included are sometimes insufficiently challenging. When differentiation is weak or insufficient to meet the needs of all abilities and pupils are not suitably engaged, their interest wanes and progress slows. There are some missed opportunities for teacher interventions at key points in lessons and the expectations of what pupils might achieve are not high enough to stretch all pupils. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enhance teaching and learning.

A key issue arising from the last inspection was the use of accurate assessment information to plan suitable work in lessons. This is still at an early stage of development. Teachers are now required to make regular assessments of pupils' progress, some of which is insecure. This is because teachers are not yet confident in making regular judgements of progress levels, which they can then use to inform their planning. They are moving away from the use of continuous formal testing and beginning to look closely at work achieved and responses in lessons in order to inform their thinking but these assessments do not feed into day-to-day lesson



planning at present. Pupils are sometimes involved in assessing how well they are achieving but too often, they do not understand what they need to do to improve. This is because verbal feedback and marking are variable and do not always help children to understand this.

Progress on the areas identified for improvement by the inspection in October 2008:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making effective use of accurate assessment information to plan work that presents a suitable challenge for pupils of all abilities - inadequate.

### Leadership and management

There are a number of signs in the school that positive changes are being implemented. In a relatively short period since the last inspection, the headteacher has started the process of bringing about the necessary improvements to move the school in the right direction. She has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of teaching and learning and is providing clear direction for the improvement strategy. Her approach is vigorous and energetic. Morale of the staff team has been maintained and they demonstrate willingness to accept change and improve their practice. Most importantly, the headteacher has convinced staff of the need to improve pupil progress and ensure that the careful tracking of this is a priority. There is also an ongoing drive to improve the quality of teaching, which teachers are positive about and willing to embrace.

The leadership capacity around the headteacher to move the school forward is improving but variable. Senior leaders have undoubtedly become more aware of their roles and responsibilities in school improvement and are willing to help drive the school forward, but there is limited impact at this stage of their improvement actions so far. In particular, there is little impact in terms of using and developing ICT to enhance teaching and learning. However, a number of improvements are evident. The function of the governors has strengthened-they have improved understanding of the school's priorities and the importance of raising standards and achievement. The governing body are now usefully organised into appropriate committees, have accessed training and are gaining a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting the school and holding it to account. The chair of governors is energetic in her work, fully involved in the school and committed to ongoing improvement.

Several staff members are now working to new remits. For example, the role and responsibilities of the special educational needs coordinator have developed significantly in order to meet the needs of the school. Consequently, the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is more effective in meeting individual needs and the reorganisation of the work of teaching assistants' work is a promising factor within this. The newly appointed learning mentor is supporting pupils well and has clear plans on how to evaluate the impact of this provision. The



work of the numeracy coordinator is particularly thoughtful and well organised. There is evidence of clear understanding, accurate identification of priorities within numeracy and useful plans to address these issues.

However, there is still too much dependency overall on the headteacher to drive improvements. Teachers need encouragement to show initiative and the confidence to lead where appropriate. The skills of lesson observation with a focus on monitoring the learning outcomes for pupils are under-developed across the wider leadership team. There is a pressing need for leadership in assessment at a whole school level in order to train and support staff to enable them to be clear about this aspect of their work, confident in their judgements and able to use the tracking data available to them. This remains a priority for action.

There has been significant improvement in establishing a whole school system to track pupils' progress. At the time of the last inspection, this was judged inadequate. Since then, a robust whole school system has been introduced. Individual progress grids are available for each class, consequently it is now easier to identify issues, highlight particular individuals or groups of pupils and plan interventions according to this information. At this early stage, just one set of data has been collated, but this is already influencing groupings and a number of intervention activities have recently been introduced to boost progress. The impact of these will be considered at the next visit.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2008:

- Ensure governors and staff with leadership responsibilities are able to contribute effectively to self-evaluation and school improvement - satisfactory
- Develop a robust system for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress in order to identify underachievement and take appropriate action where progress is insufficient - good

#### External support

Since the inspection, the local authority has worked closely with the school in implementing the agreed action plan. At this stage, the authority's consultants have delivered their training to teachers and the interventions are in line with the planned schedule. School staff are positive about these interventions, particularly in terms of improving teaching and believe these are beginning to make a difference. Internal monitoring confirms a number of improvements here, but the monitoring visit confirmed that some inconsistency remains. Some teaching is still too variable and further work is required in terms of improving teachers' use of and confidence in assessment across the school. Improvement work with the school's teaching assistants has been particularly effective.

Priorities for further improvement

There are no further priorities for improvement.