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Mrs Beverley Cordle
Headteacher
Deepcar St John's CofE Junior School
St Margaret Avenue
Deepcar
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Cordle

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Deepcar St John's CofE Junior School

Following my visit with Rosemary Eaton, additional inspector, to your school on 18 to 19 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Sheffield and the Diocese of Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Linda Murphy
Additional inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Deepcar St John's CofE Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18 – 19 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff, many groups of pupils, two governors including the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The temporary deputy headteacher continues to be seconded from the local authority. Changes to staffing include the appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher from the summer term onwards. A part-time teacher has left and a temporary part-time teacher has been appointed to share a class. The governing body now has a full complement of members.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Standards are continuing to rise and the school has increasingly effective methods to fill in the gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, on most days pupils complete a 'gap task' prior to their lessons in English and mathematics. This helps underpin pupils' learning. Improving progress is seen through the school's data analysis and in the pupils' work, which is mostly presented more neatly than in the past. The exception is presentation in mathematics where some untidy recording means that at times simple and unnecessary mistakes are made in calculation.

Good strides have been made in developing independent writing. Pupils' writing is far more evident in well presented displays, showing pupils that the school values their efforts. The introduction of a 'round robin' carousel of activities in literacy is at an early stage. It helps pupils to write with increased attention to the basics such as spelling and comprehension yet there is more organisation required to get the very best out of the strategy and ensure all are challenged appropriately. Even so, the content of writing is improving as pupils have a much better understanding not only of what is expected but also of the criteria linked to levels of the National Curriculum. A concerted effort to improve pupils' understanding of what they should be aiming for has come about through pupils being taught how to recognise the criteria of different levels of the National Curriculum. They have had practice in checking each other's views with their teachers so that judgements are increasingly accurate. Pupils in Year 6 report that such activities help them recognise the next steps required to improve further. 'Spelling zappers' linked to homework are helping to improve the spelling of frequently used words and as a result, pupils are becoming more adept and confident in correct spelling. Small groups are also



making progress through extra teaching to boost their attainment and through individual tuition.

Despite improvements to teaching, the attainment of boys is generally lower than that of girls: there are some reluctant boy writers, despite all the strategies being used for improvement and the reading of higher attainers is insufficiently challenging. Standards in reading remain higher than in writing, and standards in writing continue to be an area for further development. The school has reviewed the number of pupils on the register of special educational needs and/or disabilities and fewer pupils in this group than earlier in the year now require extra help.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement across the school – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The improving behaviour noted at the last monitoring inspection has been sustained for the great majority. For example, pupils' behaviour in a whole-school assembly led by the headteacher was impeccable. However, a small minority of older boys let themselves and the school down at lunchtime and playtimes when supervision is less structured than in classes. There have been three exclusions this academic year: the school makes clear to pupils and their families that it will not tolerate misbehaviour. In lessons that do not fully capture pupils' interest, pupils tend to lose concentration and become restless. Attendance remains above average.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve, although a few inconsistencies remain. Strengths that are now consistently evident throughout the school are good preparation and the good use of resources including the way in which interactive whiteboards are used as a natural tool for teaching. Plentiful aides-memoires for reference encourage independent work and the use of time and time constraints within parts of lessons all add to the pace of pupils' learning. Because assessment is improving, clear links are made to pupils' prior learning. Systematic modelling of questions and answers helps pupils to better understand their tasks. The learning environment is ever improving and this leads to classrooms conducive to learning and where pupils are more proud of their successes. Partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants go from strength to strength and impact increasingly on pupils' understanding. The use of discussion with partners helps to build up pupils' confidence in answering questions.



The effectiveness of practice that continues to vary includes the use of 'learning partners' which help pupils to check their work and ask questions of each other, although at times pupils talk too much and then too little is recorded. The level of challenge in solving problems is sometimes pitched too high. The responses to questioning often involve too few pupils: in this, teachers' expectations are too low because insufficient onus is placed on pupils' participation in the session.

Through professional development and regular assessments, staff are more attuned to the levels at which pupils' are capable of working. The systems for marking are being implemented with progressively more consistency. Pupils like the easy to follow methods and the increasingly good advice given by teachers so that next steps are challenging yet more easily manageable. Pupils are progressively more aware of their targets and what needs to be done to achieve them. Pupils say that teachers refer to targets much more frequently than in the past and step in with extra support if targets look like being missed.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so it enables all pupils to learn effectively – good
- Ensure that assessments made of the standards pupils are reaching and progress they are making are accurate and that the information is used to provide effective academic support and guidance – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher is increasingly successful in projecting the vision and ambition for the school and setting more challenging standards for pupils to meet in order to raise standards; confidence and a capacity to take a reflective approach are very helpful and improving attributes. For example, the support from the headteacher mentor is called upon far less frequently than when it was first instigated. Staff are ever more responsive and teamwork is far more evident than in the past. Subject leaders for the basic subjects take their responsibilities seriously and are more influential in raising achievement in their respective subjects than in the past.

The governing body is also well on the road to playing a full part in helping the school to improve in terms of the support and increasing challenge it provides. The strategic monitoring group goes from strength to strength. Moreover, each governor has a part to play in the school's development, for example, through links with subject leaders and visits to classrooms. As a result, responsibility does not rest so heavily on a few. Governance is forward-looking and has begun to take into account arrangements to ensure continuity of roles even if personnel change. However, it has yet to fully take account of the views of parents and carers.



The understanding of and use of data by the headteacher are increasingly effective in monitoring the progress of most groups of pupils. However, the tracking of progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities through individual educational plans is more difficult because targets and success criteria often lack precision and files are not always well organised to allow quick and easy access.

A common thread throughout the leadership is the improving quality and regularity of monitoring, analysis and self-evaluation, all of which are setting the school on the road to building its capacity to improve. The outcomes are used increasingly well to more carefully improve the education the school provides by better ensuring that the gaps in pupils' learning are addressed and that learning moves on more quickly than before. Even so, the many 'drop ins' to check the teaching are not well documented and therefore, it is not so easy to track the development as in the fully documented longer observations of teaching which have increasing clarity in identifying strengths, areas to develop and the success of actions taken.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school and that they play a full part in improving it – good

External support

The acting deputy headteacher seconded from the local authority continues to work closely with class teachers in coaching and co-leading initiatives. This appointee works very closely with the headteacher dovetailing their skills so that the quality of education continues to grow. The local authority is also providing financial support so that the school can maintain its present organisation over the coming year. Although support is readily available and built into the termly raising attainment plans, the school is increasingly taking the initiative in identifying its needs. The local authority is taking a 'step back' yet continues to closely monitor developments. For example, very helpful reviews regularly take place and help guide the school's development. The diocese successfully continues its support for governance.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of the individual educational plans and the accessibility of information pertaining to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

