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5 March 2010

Mrs Sharon Stone
Headteacher
Wirksworth Junior School
Wash Green
Wirksworth
Derbyshire
DE4 4FD

Dear Mrs Stone

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wirksworth Junior School

Following my visit with Glynn Storer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2009. 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 Strategic Director of Children and Younger Adults for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Wirksworth Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, pupils, the Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Following the inspection in October 2009, the substantive headteacher immediately took leave of absence. A temporary acting headteacher has taken up post from 1 January 2010 for the spring and summer terms, or until the substantive head teacher returns, if earlier. The senior leadership team now comprises the acting headteacher and two senior leaders, one with a lead in literacy and the other with a lead in numeracy. A further senior member of staff, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, is on maternity leave. The role is being covered temporarily by an existing member of staff. One of the class teachers resigned in February and a replacement has been found. There are currently 160 pupils on roll, which is a decrease of 10 pupils from last term.

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

Pupils do not make the expected rate of progress either in lessons or over time. There remains insufficient challenge for older and higher ability pupils in particular because expectations of them are still too low; nor are expectations equivalent across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is commensurate with the quality of teaching. In the best lessons, pupils' enjoyment is high and all groups of pupils achieve well. The current grouping of pupils means that there is often an excessively wide ability range in the class. In the weaker lessons, the plans are not suitably adapted for the range of pupils in the class and the work is not consistently linked to pupils' targets. Staff are focussed on school improvement and are committed to raising pupils' achievement and rates of progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. However, changes in practice are not yet firmly embedded and the legacy of underachievement is taking time to overcome.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- ensure that pupils consistently reach standards which are commensurate with their capabilities and starting points in writing and mathematics – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes



Pupils' behaviour remains good across the school. With initiatives such as the breakfast club, and the nurture group aimed at pupils needing additional support, the willingness to come to school on time and emotional well being for a significant minority of pupils has improved significantly since the inspection.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is variable across the school and inadequate teaching has not been eradicated. However, good practice is evident in some literacy and numeracy lessons and is worthy of disseminating internally. The introduction of a presentation policy has helped to raise expectations for standards of work, although there is still wide variation in this. The updated homework policy has assured a greater regularity in the setting of homework across the school, although this remains uneven in quality and relevance, both to the curriculum and to individual pupils. Target setting has improved with targets communicated to parents and carers through the home/school diaries. However, the marking of pupils' work makes insufficient reference to these targets and does not consistently provide developmental commentary. Assessment to support learning remains weak and unreliable. New systems are at a very early stage of development: information gained is not yet being used effectively to influence lesson planning.

The curriculum is heavily focussed on the core skills of literacy and numeracy as discrete subjects and the school has not exploited opportunities to develop reading, writing and applying mathematics in other subject areas. The quality of care, guidance and support also remains variable. The school is addressing the needs of those children who have a statement for their special educational needs and has developed strong links with other professionals and outside agencies. The school recognises that it has more work to do on target setting for other pupils with an individual education plan, in monitoring the effectiveness of any interventions they receive, and in checking these pupils' progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- strengthen assessment procedures – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The changes to the structure of the leadership team have been beneficial in distributing workload more evenly and providing mutual support. Teamwork is developing and coordinators are beginning to know and lead their subject areas better. There is a determination to bring about change. Monitoring and evaluation has taken place in literacy and numeracy through scrutiny of planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Monitoring of lessons in these subjects, and assessment, is less secure. However, observations made by the acting headteacher and the local authority are accurate. As a result, staff understand more clearly what they need to do to improve. They are currently focussed on developing robust assessment procedures and the effective to use assessment information to improve



teaching and learning. However, staff skills and understanding in this are underdeveloped and there has been too little internal or external moderation to ensure that these assessments are accurate and reliable. The school's improvement plan wholly focuses on the areas for improvement identified during the inspection. Progress towards these is regularly evaluated. The acting headteacher is now better informed and able to provide governors with more accurate information about the school's progress. They are actively involved in monitoring this and consequently, governance is strengthening through this greater knowledge and involvement. The school's procedures and recording for safeguarding pupils are now in line with current government regulations. Staff awareness on this has been, and continues to be, raised through professional development activities.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management at all levels to maintain relentless and effective focus on increasing the rate of pupils' progress – satisfactory
- ensure that the current government regulations for safeguarding are fully met by December 2009 – satisfactory.

External support

The quality of the external support provided by the local authority is good. Staff have received good quality input from a range of local authority consultants who are developing the staff team and their classroom practices. The consultants are also assisting with developing systems for monitoring teaching and learning more effectively. The local authority secured an experienced and capable acting headteacher and has worked very closely with her to positive effect. The schedule of local authority support team meetings has been strictly adhered to so an accurate overview of the school's progress has been maintained. While the impact of actions contained within the LA statement of action is limited since changes in practice are recent and not yet being embedded, the local authority has achieved all of the targets on the action plan within the agreed timescales.