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8 July 2010

Mrs Susan Penglase
Alvaston Junior School
Elvaston Lane
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Derby
DE24 0PU

Dear Mrs Penglase

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Alvaston Junior School

Following my visit with Sheelagh Barnes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6-7 July 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 February 2010. 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derby.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Alvaston Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 July 2010

Evidence

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, pupils, the Chair of Governing Body, the Chair of the Governing Body Finance Committee and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left the school and one has been appointed.

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

The 2010 end of Key Stage 2 test results show that there is no improvement from 2009 when attainment was significantly below average in all subjects. Evidence gathered during this inspection shows that attainment is below average in all year groups. Although pupils' progress is beginning to improve, it continues to be too slow. In the majority of lessons observed by inspectors, pupils' learning was no better than satisfactory and sometimes it was inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Most pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and work well together. On the occasions when pupils become restless and inattentive, it is because the work given is not matched well enough to their capabilities and they do not feel the satisfaction of learning new skills or knowledge.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is currently not good enough to raise pupils' achievement. Observations undertaken during this inspection show that there is some good teaching, but too much is no better than satisfactory and some is inadequate. Although most teachers now have higher expectations of pupils' achievements and a greater knowledge of how to assess pupils' levels of attainment, assessment information is still not used well enough to match pupils' work to their capabilities. In many lessons, teachers are not clear enough about what they want pupils to learn and do not carefully plan the small steps which help ensure effective learning.

Since the last inspection, the marking policy has been reviewed and, in some classes, marking shows clearly what pupils have to do to improve their work.

However, this is inconsistent. There are very few examples in books of pupils being given opportunities to respond to teachers' marking comments.

Additional opportunities have been provided for pupils to write freely and at length through dedicated writing sessions and links with subjects other than literacy. Some teachers are also beginning to find opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in mathematics across different subjects, often relating the mathematical problems to real-life situations. However, these developments are currently having little impact on pupils' achievement because not enough attention is given in lessons to helping pupils improve their skills in a clear and progressive way. The school has decided that the promotion of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills is not an immediate priority. Therefore, there has been no improvement in this area.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' learning - inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Several of the senior leaders were appointed just prior to the last inspection and, with support from the local authority, their skills of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are now becoming more rigorous. During the monitoring inspection, the headteacher and inspector jointly observed several lessons. The headteacher's judgements about the quality of pupils' learning in lessons were accurate and she identified correctly how improvements could be made. Discussions with senior leaders show that there is beginning to emerge a common understanding of the basics of good teaching and learning, and leadership and management. The local authority reports that the headteacher's meetings with individual teachers to discuss pupils' progress and hold them to account are rigorous. However, some of the senior leaders say that they do not yet have the skills to deal effectively with the few teachers who do not accept the need to raise their expectations of pupils' achievement and improve their teaching skills. Consequently, leaders and managers are having little impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning in some classes. The governing body has received training from the local authority and is now more aware of its role in holding the school to account for pupils' outcomes. Five new governors will commence their duties in September of this year.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Introduce rigour into the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, and especially of teaching and learning - inadequate

External support

All leaders say they are pleased with the support they have received from the local authority. Actions taken to provide support and guidance have been focused appropriately on the main areas for improvement stemming from the statement of action. However, the local authority's work has yet to have a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning, the effectiveness of whole-school leadership and management and the rate of pupils' progress.

Priorities for further improvement

The school should ensure that in all lessons teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and carefully plan the small steps which help ensure effective learning. All inadequate teaching must be eradicated as a matter of urgency.