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Stephen Wood
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wood

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Clifford Road Primary School

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12–13 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed in any key stage.

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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

George Derby
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- Raise attainment and ensure that all pupils make at least the expected progress in English by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - improving pupils' skills in constructing sentences, punctuation and spelling
 - ensuring all teachers have similarly high expectations of the presentation of work and developing a whole-school approach to the teaching of handwriting and correct letter formation
 - increasing the opportunities for writing at length in English and across the curriculum.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that teaching is consistently good or better and eliminate inadequate teaching by:
 - ensuring that assessments are accurate and used effectively to plan work that challenges and matches closely the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils
 - developing a whole-school approach to planning lessons, and ensuring plans include clear learning objectives and are consistent across year groups
 - developing and implementing a whole-school marking policy, ensuring that target setting and marking procedures consistently give pupils a clear understanding of their next steps for learning
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating pupils' work and the quality of teaching across the school, putting the emphasis on pupils' learning, and increasing teachers' accountability for the progress made by pupils.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - reviewing and revising the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team so that it is more effective in driving school improvements
 - developing a rigorous approach to assessing attainment in reading and writing so that data used for tracking pupils' progress are reliable and accurate
 - developing the role of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and holding leaders to account.

Special measures: monitoring of Clifford Road Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 December 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 17 lessons, looked carefully at documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, groups of pupils and parents and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. They also spoke to representatives from the local authority.

Context

Five teachers left the school at the end of the summer term and while some permanent appointments have been made, one class has been taught by a number of temporary teachers this term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards in English and mathematics were broadly average at the end of both key stages last summer. Pupils made the progress expected of them overall. However, within this picture not all pupils have done well or made enough progress, and there was considerable variation among groups in Key Stage 2.

A small number of older pupils who speak English as an additional language failed to make sufficient progress. Boys did particularly poorly in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2 and made limited progress during their time there. Few attained the higher levels in English or mathematics. By contrast, because of their high rate of progress, girls' attainment significantly exceeded that of boys in all aspects of English and in mathematics. Some other groups of pupils also reached high standards in mathematics.

The school has done much to reduce all this variation because it has raised its sights to ensure that all groups of pupils do their best. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment is closing more quickly. Pupils' achievement is improving at a faster rate now that teaching has got better. However, teaching and achievement are not yet consistently good and there are still some weaknesses.

Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and understanding at typical levels for their age. They are continuing to make good progress, because of good-quality teaching and close attention to what they need to learn. Towards the end of Key Stage 1 this good progress slows in some classes because work is not always adapted well enough for the different groups. Progress in Key Stage 2 is now becoming more consistent and the school's accurate assessments show that it is now accelerating in most classes, with boys catching up

to the level of girls. Pupils' progress has been slower where there have been difficulties in recruiting staff.

The school's determination to ensure that pupils' English skills improve rapidly is paying off, particularly in writing. Pupils now write for different purposes and audiences, and at length, in a wide range of different contexts. Their skills have been transformed and most now produce well-presented and accurately written work. This is because of the good models they see. The school has transformed the classrooms and corridors with vibrant displays that celebrate pupils' achievements in writing. The additional reading and writing resources in each room also help pupils to make better progress in English. Pupils can add to some of the displays, for example by increasing the list of vocabulary so that new words or ideas can be used by other pupils in the class. Books and activities interest boys and the new resources are clearly welcomed.

Through the systematic teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and routine handwriting and spelling lessons, boys' capability in reading and writing has improved well. All pupils say they now enjoy writing and can see how what they are learning in English lessons can be applied to their written work in other subjects. Sometimes, though, teachers do not demand enough high-quality writing in other subjects, and teachers do not use computers enough to help more reluctant or weaker writers.

Occasionally, pupils with the lowest attainment and those learning English as an additional language do not make enough progress in lessons. This is because the work set for them is not matched closely enough to what they need to do and learn, or they do not get enough of the right sort of help.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment and ensuring that all pupils make at least the expected progress in English – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching ranges from a small amount which requires improvement to the occasional lesson where it is outstanding. Much of the teaching is now good; this is partly due to the headteacher's determination to improve the quality through regular monitoring, and partly to the influence of the intensive teaching programme.

Staff now have a clear focus on what pupils should learn and achieve. Pupils now have plenty of opportunity to write in different subjects, and staff are adept at planning work so they can develop their skills. Lessons motivate pupils because teachers make them work hard and expect a great deal, especially where their written work is concerned. Pupils rise to the challenge and are very keen to ensure they achieve the 'success criteria' set for each lesson (the things they need to do

and learn to reach the goals set by their teachers). The use of these helps pupils to understand all the things they need to achieve. Written planning in nearly all classes is detailed and the breakdown of what different groups will achieve, based on accurate and regular assessment, ensure that work is matched to what they need to learn. Staff plan together to ensure that pupils who are in the same year group, but different classes, learn the same things. Occasionally, the planning in a few classes is less detailed and there is little specific planning for pupils at different levels of attainment. Some pupils who need lots of extra help are sometimes given work that does not meet their specific needs closely enough.

Staff's skills in assessment have improved markedly and pupils themselves are regularly asked to check on how well they have done, as well as how others have succeeded. Pupils are developing a good range of ways to work things out for themselves, and learning what they need to do next.

The marking of pupils' work is now consistent across the school. It is detailed and clear and helps pupils to work out what they have done well and the next steps needed in their learning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that teaching is consistently good or better and eliminate inadequate teaching – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well around the building and in lessons. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. They are polite and speak respectfully and sensibly to each other and to adults. They have a greater understanding about why they need to improve their reading, writing, and mathematical skills. This is because teachers give them clear guidance, and as a result they have positive attitudes and motivation, especially for writing.

On rare occasions there is some running in corridors, but generally pupils concentrate well on their learning a calm atmosphere. Some occasional silliness in lessons, generally by a few boys, is dealt with effectively by staff.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Good improvement has been made in the way leaders and managers work together and plan for improvement. Significant improvement has been made to the learning environment since the last visit. The parent committee has confidence in the school's work, although the parents were unaware of how they can make their views known through Parent View.

The skills of the headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other well. The headteacher has a very accurate view of teaching and has done much with the local leader of education to improve teachers' competence. His analysis of teaching is perceptive and his feedback to teachers gives them clear guidance on how to improve further. The deputy headteacher has made significant strides in ensuring assessment is accurate and pupils' progress, especially in reading and writing, is tracked thoroughly each half term. A comprehensive picture of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding and where their strengths and weaknesses lie is now developing well. As a result, teachers are using the information about the levels pupils have reached, how well they learn and their interests to plan lessons. Some take more account of varying attainment in their planning than others, however.

The phase leaders are now clear about what they need to achieve, and work well with senior staff to develop areas they are responsible for. They are instrumental in instigating the changes needed. Planning and monitoring at all levels are thorough and clearly focused on the things that need to improve. In English and mathematics, strategic planning is much sharper. The leader of mathematics has done much to improve the ways staff and pupils think about solving problems, although she does not have enough time to carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching.

Very recently, the local authority identified that the management of special educational needs required improvement. For instance, the school was not checking what impact the support it gives to pupils who have special educational needs was having on their achievement. Although this area of the school's work was not a focus of this visit, concerns were raised about how well the needs of such pupils are being met in lessons. This will be a focus of the next inspection.

Governors now do more to find out for themselves about the school's work. Their ability to challenge the school and hold it to account for what leaders do is improving. Governors' documents are beginning to show more tenacity in the way questions are asked, based on their increased knowledge. However, no-one had challenged a major inaccuracy about how pupils' progress is measured, as recorded in their minutes.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels – good.

External support

The local authority has provided good focused support and training, such as through the intensive teaching programme, in conjunction with the local leader of education. This has resulted in better teaching and a clearer view of what needs to be done to improve the school's work.