

20 March 2008

Mrs C Robinson
Headteacher
Austhorpe Primary School
Austhorpe Lane
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS15 8TP

Dear Mrs Robinson

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF AUSTHORPE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Christopher Griffin, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 March 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2006. 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 – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Executive Director of Education Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Liz Godman
Additional inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF AUSTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 18 and 19 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons and break time activities, examined documents, and held discussions with the headteacher, the school leadership team, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from Education Leeds.

Context

A teacher joined the school in January 2008 to share teaching of the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

The progress of pupils in the Reception class has improved since the autumn term. Some of these pupils are now working at the levels expected by the end of the school year and a few are exceeding them. Improved teaching of the most able pupils, particularly in mathematical and language and literacy development, has assisted this accelerated progress. Careful identification and support for those not progressing as expected have also improved achievement for these pupils across the areas of learning, particularly in personal, social and emotional development.

At Key Stage 1 the rate of pupils' progress has increased, as accurate assessments are used to provide more challenging work. In Year 2, more pupils than in 2007 are on track to reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's assessment information indicates that the current Year 6 will not reach the same high standards as in the previous two years. However, the present Year 6 pupils continue to make good progress from lower starting points than their predecessors and are expected to reach the challenging targets set for them in English. Pupils' achievements in English, particularly writing, are improving in Key Stage 2 as a whole. Younger pupils in the key stage also continue to make steady progress, with accelerated progress for some higher attaining pupils, who have work better suited to their needs. Carefully set work in small groups and support in class are increasing the rate of progress of pupils identified by the school as in danger of falling behind or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Overall, more pupils at Key Stage 2 are making faster progress than at the time of the last monitoring inspection.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- improve standards and pupils' achievements from the Foundation Stage to Year 5 – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to show the strengths apparent during previous visits. Their behaviour is good and they are enthusiastic about school life. Discussions with members of the school council revealed their growing pride in the council's contribution to improving the experience of school for all pupils, through projects such as the forthcoming upgrading of playground facilities. The council is an impressive group of pupils, with the very youngest feeling confident and secure enough to speak and the oldest willingly giving them the opportunity to do so.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve and to become more consistent. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. Better lesson planning consistently includes tasks that are accurately pitched at pupils' different abilities, because teachers are using assessment information more effectively. At the start of lessons, teachers state clearly and give guidance to the pupils on what they must do to succeed. Occasionally, pupils remain less clear about the purpose of the lesson because the teacher's focus is on the tasks they will do, rather than what they should be learning.

More frequent checks in lessons by pupils of how well they, or others, are doing are helping them to have a sharper understanding of how to produce effective work. For example, the pupils' regular use of the 'traffic lights' system is established in all classes, allowing pupils to convey how secure they are about the work in hand. Other methods such as the use of 'talking partners' are deepening or clarifying the pupils' understanding. On occasions, these approaches lack the necessary rigour and focus to help them be effective. Marking in Key Stage 2 is helpful, recognising strengths in pupils' work and giving good guidance on how to improve, especially in literacy. These strengths remain less consistent during Key Stage 1. Assessment has improved in the Foundation Stage, but does not always identify the next steps in learning for each pupil.

The role of teaching assistants in supporting learning is improving. In lessons they work with increasing initiative, responding to where help is needed. They also play an effective role in working with small groups of pupils who need additional help to improve their literacy, numeracy or personal development.

Within this picture of steady improvement, some weaknesses remain in teaching and the curriculum. These require attention before the school's progress can be accelerated. There is still a tendency, at both Key Stages 1 and 2, for pupils to spend too much time listening to the teacher. Although their progress is improving, the higher attaining pupils remain insufficiently challenged, because there is no shared recognition of how quickly and independently these pupils could learn. This reflects shortcomings in whole-school curriculum planning. The current range of topics remains narrow with much emphasis on isolated literacy and numeracy lessons. As a result, learning lacks fun, and opportunities to use and develop basic skills in different subjects are restricted. There are some examples of exciting investigative

work and independent learning, in Year 4 science, for example, but these are not typical of pupils' experiences.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- increase the quality of good teaching – satisfactory
- develop consistent approaches to curricular planning and tracking pupils' progress so that provision meets the needs of all pupils - satisfactory

Leadership and management

The prudent and systematic approach of the school's leaders has ensured that secure improvements have continued since the last monitoring inspection. The headteacher leads this work, which is enabling steady progress in developing teaching and pupils' learning. Increasingly, since the last monitoring inspection, other senior leaders work together as a team. They have a greater recognition of the school's strengths and weaknesses through a thorough and rigorous approach to school self-evaluation. Members of the leadership team have relished the greater opportunities they have been given to make a difference to the work of the school and are committed to improving pupils' progress.

Robust approaches to regular and frequent monitoring have increased the shared understanding of all staff of what needs to be done to improve pupils' learning. As a result, leaders are taking further planned steps to improve teaching. These include training and support for staff that are better matched to their identified needs. The effects of this improving monitoring are to be seen in more accurate assessments in writing and mathematics, where expectations and standards are rising. The school has accurately identified that there remains more to be done in relation to reading and science and for subject coordinators to take a greater role in the monitoring and development of their subjects.

Governors are increasingly well informed and are asking more sharply focused questions to challenge the school about pupils' achievements and standards. Governors are taking more responsibility themselves to find out about the work of the school and how it is improving.

The leadership team and governors recognise the need to continue to increase the quantity of good teaching and to offer pupils more enjoyable learning experiences through a more exciting curriculum, so that the rate of improvement can be accelerated.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in December 2006:

- improve the leadership and management of the school to ensure timely action is taken to secure improvements in the school's work and standards – satisfactory
- establish a shared approach to monitoring the work of the school – satisfactory

External support

Education Leeds continues to provide effective support to the school. This has improved aspects of teaching through well-matched support from advanced skills teachers, consultants and the school improvement adviser. The joint review group is providing a valuable opportunity for staff, governors and Education Leeds to share information about the improvements being made. There is a common understanding that the next step for the school is to be less reliant on external support and more independent in the way it brings about improvements.

Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities identified in the December 2006 report remain the most important for the school.