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25 November 2010

Mrs Stephanie Tasker
Headteacher
Pinehurst Primary School
Pinehurst Avenue
Liverpool
Merseyside
L4 7UF

Dear Mrs Tasker

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pinehurst Primary School

Following my visit with Jennie Platt, Additional Inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 November 2010, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2009. 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 – satisfactory

This letter and the 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 Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Liz Godman
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- Ensure that the overall quality of teaching and learning is at least good throughout the school, thus eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Improve the effectiveness of school self-evaluation in order to hold leaders, managers and governors to account for improving pupils' achievement.
- Raise attendance to at least the levels expected of similar schools.
- Adapt the curriculum so that it better meets pupils' needs and develops their basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Ensure that marking and academic guidance consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their work.

Special measures: monitoring of Pinehurst Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body, another member of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in July 2010, all classes now have permanent teachers. Teachers have moved from other parts of the school to the lower Key Stage 2 teaching team. At the time of the monitoring inspection, two teachers from Key Stage 2 were absent.

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

Pupils' learning in lessons continues to show steady improvement. Pupils are starting to respond to the growing expectation that they will work independently. However, these routines are not established securely in every class. Sometimes, the pace of learning slows a little when an adult is not on hand to check pupils' understanding or to ensure they persist with the tasks set. In contrast, occasionally, adults intervene too frequently, so that pupils are distracted from their work. In the better lessons, pupils' speaking and listening skills are increasing because there are opportunities to talk with a partner or with others in a group. This is improving pupils' vocabulary and extending their imagination. For example, those in Key Stage 1 talked enthusiastically with a partner to identify the sounds they might hear in different locations. Pupils in Year 6 engaged in imaginative discussion in small groups to identify the qualities of their hero characters. However, at present, not all pupils are transferring these gains into their written work. Pupils' progress is continuing to accelerate when they work in small groups or individually with teaching assistants. This is because the work they do is closely matched to their needs, ensuring their growing success in the challenges set for them. Pupils in Year 6, for example, rapidly increased their understanding of how to calculate the perimeter of complex shapes.

Pupils' achievement and progress continue to improve steadily. The results of tests and assessments undertaken by pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2010 were considerably better than in previous years. These pupils also made greater progress overall during Key Stage 2 in comparison to those who left in the previous year. Their progress overall was in line with that expected, with much of the increased progress taking place during the last year. Despite this, attainment overall, and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics, remain low.

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

- raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance levels continue to improve, particularly in upper Key Stage 2. Since September 2010, the overall rates of attendance are moving closer to national averages. The school continues to focus on improving the attendance of the small number of persistent absentees to some positive effect. Punctuality is much improved and very few pupils are late for school in the morning because they are now eager to be there.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are becoming more positive, especially when they are actively engaged and enjoying the lesson. There are a few pupils who do not yet take responsibility for their own learning or for their behaviour in school. The management of the rare instances of challenging behaviour is increasingly effective, so that learning is rarely disturbed. Indeed, most pupils have a greater interest in getting on with their work and in providing a positive model for younger or less responsible pupils. As their literacy and numeracy skills continue to develop, pupils are increasingly prepared for the future. Pupils also show a growing moral and social understanding, although their spiritual understanding and knowledge of different cultures are improving less rapidly.

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

- raise attendance to at least the levels expected of similar schools – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve. A start has been made in ensuring that activities available throughout the day build on the focused teaching. The resources provided show a better response to the children's interests and are adjusted in light of their use by the children on previous occasions. Adult-led activities are matched more closely to the needs of the group. This is helping children to make a stronger start in developing their communication, language and literacy skills. Some children take a while to settle and to decide what they will do when they are allowed to choose. Sometimes this is because routines are not yet established fully or because adults do not make their expectations clear. The quality of adults' observations of children's learning is improving. However, in some cases,

the records made of these do not identify the next steps for the individual child's learning.

The quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 shows steady improvement. The developments noted at the last monitoring inspection have been maintained. The better quality of teaching is most marked in literacy and numeracy lessons. This is the case especially when teachers know the pupils well and are familiar with the age group they are teaching. Improvements are less secure when this is not so, or in subjects other than literacy and numeracy. Lesson plans are now consistently including clear references as to how the work will be adapted to meet the different needs of the pupils within the class. Lessons start with clear learning objectives shared with the pupils although, just occasionally, these focus on what the pupils will do, rather than on what they will learn. Increasingly, a majority of lessons are characterised by clear success criteria, often with the pupils themselves identifying these. In the better lessons, pupils assess their own or a partner's progress against these criteria, but this is not yet secure and, on occasion, opportunities are missed or overlooked. At times, the pupils are distracted from getting on with their work, when they are keen to do so, because of the teacher's frequent pauses to remind them of the success criteria. In the stronger lessons also, teachers adjust the activities and their explanations in light of pupils' understanding and progress. The features of better lessons, identified at the last monitoring inspection, are present in a greater number of the lessons observed this time.

The marking of pupils' work shows further improvement. Work is consistently marked against the lesson objectives and, at Key Stage 2, there is growing evidence that pupils make accurate assessments of their own or other pupils' work. Pupils' marked work in literacy and numeracy is consistent in including positive comments from the teacher with ideas for further improvement. During lessons, pupils have their longer-term targets for improvement to hand and can explain the steps they have to take to reach them. They show a growing understanding of how what they are doing is helping them to meet these targets.

The curriculum is more effective in meeting pupils' needs and in building upon earlier learning, especially in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' use of literacy and numeracy skills in the different subjects of the curriculum is increasing. Sometimes though, in lessons in the other subjects, there is a greater emphasis on developing these skills at the expense of the content specific to the subject. There remains more to do to strengthen the links between subjects and to develop pupils' research skills in order to increase their engagement and independence. Fewer pupils are now taught in small groups. This means that those groups which do run are more tightly focused on closing gaps in pupils' knowledge or skills. This is contributing to pupils' increased progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

- ensure that the overall quality of teaching and learning is at least good throughout the school, thus eradicating inadequate teaching – satisfactory
- adapt the curriculum so that it better meets pupils' needs and develops their basic literacy and numeracy skills – satisfactory
- ensure that marking and academic guidance consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their work – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Improvement has been maintained since the last monitoring inspection. However, there remains more to do to develop the skills of the middle leaders so that they are better equipped to share the workload carried by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. In particular, more work is required to improve the leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics. Staff are committed to improving the school. They are eager to improve their own practice and to develop their skills so that they are better placed to contribute to further improvement, for example in the different subjects of the curriculum. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher continue to show their strong skills in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's teaching and pupils' learning and progress. However, this skill is not yet developed consistently amongst all the staff. The school's clear plans continue to drive its improvement, especially in relation to the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in June 2009. These plans are reviewed and revised regularly so that improvement is steady and sustained. The school has started to evaluate other aspects of its work, but this self-evaluation is still developing and the evaluation has yet to focus sharply on the effect of the school's actions.

Members of the governing body continue to support the school's work and to provide increasing degrees of challenge to its leaders and to one another. New governors have joined the governing body since the last monitoring inspection. This is strengthening it and is starting to reduce the governing body's reliance on the local authority additional governors.

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

- improve the effectiveness of school self-evaluation in order to hold leaders, managers and governors to account for improving pupils' achievement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide helpful support to the school through its regular reviews and the guidance from the School Improvement Partner and the local authority's school improvement team. The local authority recognises that it is now appropriate to draw back a little, in order to assist the school in becoming less dependent upon external help. This will also help the school to complete its increasingly accurate self-evaluation, determine its own priorities and to build on and sustain the improvements made to date.