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Thursday 25 November 2010

Dr Tony James
Langley Primary School
Titford Road
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Dear Dr James

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Langley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

The school may employ one newly qualified teacher.

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 Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the rate of progress made by pupils in reading, writing, mathematics and science so that 80% make significant improvement each year by ensuring that:
 - work provides a challenge for pupils of all abilities
 - teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, engagement in tasks and work rate and that they communicate these clearly to pupils in lessons
 - pupils have greater opportunities to develop their ability to work independently.

- Raise attendance to 94% and reduce the rate of exclusion by:
 - ensuring that the school's behaviour policy is implemented consistently across the school
 - developing strategies that enable pupils to remain in school and continue learning as an alternative to fixed-term exclusion
 - strengthening partnerships with external agencies to provide more effective support for pupils who are poor attenders or who need help to improve their behaviour
 - reducing the number of holidays taken during the school term.

- Strengthen the capacity for improvement by:
 - involving all leaders in the process of evaluation, in particular the evaluation of progress made by different groups of pupils
 - linking the evaluation of teaching to its impact on pupils' progress
 - revising the school improvement plan so that targets are both challenging and realistic, are accompanied by clear action plans and have success criteria that are linked to outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that governors meet their statutory duties in relation to community cohesion and equality of opportunity
 - developing the role of governors in challenging and holding the school to account for its work.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, increase the progress made by children by providing more structured opportunities for them to acquire literacy and numeracy skills.

Special measures: monitoring of Langley Primary School

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

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including seven lesson observations and an assembly, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the school improvement partner, local authority attendance officers, a group of pupils and nominated staff.

Context

There have been no significant contextual changes since the previous visit.

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

The quality of pupils' learning continues to improve because the quality of teaching is more consistent and assessment is more sharply focused. Teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory and in four lessons good or better. The improvement in the overall quality of teaching has accelerated the progress that pupils make in lessons. As a result, the standards reached by learners in the 2010 national assessments were much improved. The percentage of pupils who achieved the expected levels of attainment for 11-year-olds in English and mathematics rose significantly from previous years to average levels. The rate of progress fluctuates from class to class: it is strongest in Year 6; in some other classes further work remains to be done to emulate the progress made by these pupils.

The school has worked hard to address underachievement with targeted intervention and additional support. Assessment information indicates that many children have significant weaknesses, especially in communication, language and literacy, when they start school. Standards in oracy, reading, writing and handwriting remain low across the early years and Key Stage 1, although the school is working with some success to address this. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, progress is improving because of well-planned activities with a successful focus on improving writing.

Information gained from rigorous assessment procedures is used effectively to plan and review lessons, track pupil progress and ensure that the pupils know what is expected of them. Increasingly, older pupils are aware of how they can improve their work, and this is supported by the regular use of peer assessment. Teachers' use of assessment has improved the focus and pace of learning in lessons. This is evident, for example, in the use of learning logs that set out targets for pupils to try and achieve.

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

- Increase the rate of progress made by pupils in reading, writing, mathematics and science so that 80% make significant improvement each year – good.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, increase the progress made by children by providing more structured opportunities for them to acquire literacy and numeracy skills – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance, while remaining low, has improved significantly over the last year and the school is edging closer to achieving average figures. Attendance continues to be rigorously and regularly monitored. The school is an orderly and calm environment. Lessons frequently encourage positive attitudes to learning and pupils respond well. In lessons and around the school, pupils are polite and considerate. Incidents of poor behaviour are rare and few in number. There have been no fixed term exclusions this term.

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

- Raise attendance to 94% and reduce the rate of exclusion – good.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching continues to improve. It has been enhanced through a renewed determination to achieve the improvements needed. When learning is well organised and lively, the pupils enjoy their lessons and collaborate well; their enthusiasm for learning was evident across the school.

Staff work effectively to take on board the school's expectations for planning and assessment. Teaching has a number of positive features: lessons are suitably planned and prepared; increasingly, lessons are well paced and marking and assessment are systematic and effective. The most effective learning occurs when lessons are founded on high expectations, and in the best lessons activities are carefully planned to engage and motivate pupils of all abilities. Learning is organised to encourage the development of pupils' independent working skills.

The school has improved the curriculum to develop writing opportunities across the curriculum. Older pupils, for example, talk enthusiastically about their written applications to join Robin Hood's Merry Men, and their understanding of what constitutes effective writing was enhanced by this exciting work. In some lessons the

level of challenge for higher attaining pupils is not as high as it could be, thus limiting their progress.

Pupils are beginning to take more responsibility for their own learning and progress, using information provided by teachers to help improve their work. Increasingly, older pupils check their work for accuracy, looking for basic errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and reflect on how to make further improvements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher communicates high expectations to staff about securing improvement and rigorously monitors the quality of teaching and learning. The impact of actions to improve provision is closely analysed and discussed with staff so that further strategies can be efficiently planned. The leadership roles of subject and key stage leaders have been strengthened and they welcome the new accountability they share for school improvement. There is a collective effort focused on addressing key aspects of provision, such as use of assessment information. Staff morale is good. They work with increasing effectiveness to strengthen practice and improve outcomes for pupils. Members of the governing body have strengthened their role and understand their responsibilities. They are more effectively engaged in supporting school improvement than at the time of the previous inspection.

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

- Strengthen the capacity for sustained improvement – good.

External support

The support provided by the school improvement partner has been excellent. The school values the continued guidance provided by local authority consultants; support for the Early Years has been particularly helpful this term.