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14 October 2010

Mr Harrold
Acting Headteacher
Wollescote Primary School
Drummond Road
Lye
Stourbridge
DY9 8YA

Dear Mr Harrold

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wollescote Primary School

Following my visit with Sally Hall, additional inspector, to your school on 12 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2010. 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 – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers should 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

Ensure that the quality of teaching is good or better and eliminate all inadequate teaching so that all pupils make good or better progress throughout both key stages, but particularly in Key Stage 2, by:

- ensuring learning activities are precisely matched to the learning needs of individual pupils through regular assessment within lessons so that planning is adjusted to challenge all learners
- raising teachers' expectations of the accelerated progress pupils can make
- providing clear guidance to pupils, through careful marking and target setting, so that they know how to improve their work
- ensuring that new strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning are consistently implemented, particularly in developing pupils' independent skills and active involvement in learning
- maximising learning opportunities by engaging pupils in their learning through a more creative curriculum that ensures progression for pupils to develop their basic skills within relevant contexts
- raising attendance to average to eliminate gaps in pupils' learning.

Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:

- developing the roles of leaders at all levels, particularly the roles of senior and middle managers, to increase the capacity of the school to improve
- raising expectations by ensuring tracking and target-setting systems are used effectively and contain accurate information about what pupils know and can do
- sharpening the school's improvement planning so that there are precise targets by which progress can be measured
- establishing a professional development plan for all staff and building on the good practice of in-house coaching
- developing the governing body's role in challenging and holding the school to account so that the school's performance improves.

Special measures: monitoring of Wollescote Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 12 October 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, phase leaders, associate headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Following the previous inspection the headteacher was absent from 7 May 2010 due to illness. He did not return and subsequently resigned. The deputy headteacher led the school in the headteacher's absence and was appointed as acting headteacher from 1 July 2010. At the time of the monitoring inspection two members of staff were absent due to illness, one long term. An associate headteacher was appointed as from 1 September 2010 to support the school, and at the time of this monitoring visit had spent 12 days in school. The post of headteacher has been advertised and interviews are due to take place in the week beginning 18 October 2010.

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

The school made the decision not to undertake Key Stage 2 assessment tests at the end of the summer term and so there are no assessment data to be validated by external markers. The school assesses pupils' progress every term and this is now analysed in detail. Assessment data collected since the previous inspection indicate that pupils have made at least satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. However, judgements made about pupils' progress as seen in lesson observations, conducted by senior school staff and as part of the monitoring visit do not concur with this judgement. In a significant number of lessons observed by inspectors in Key Stage 2 different groups of pupils made inadequate progress, especially the most able pupils. In most lessons pupils made barely satisfactory progress, and so were unable to close the significant gap between their attainment and that expected for their age.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour observed during the two days was mostly good. Pupils were polite and keen to help each other. They responded well to teachers' expectations but because these were often low in terms of the academic challenge given, pupils rarely exerted themselves to achieve well.

Attendance has not improved since the previous inspection. The school has produced an attendance policy and now has an action plan which helpfully outlines

courses of action to take. Low attendance since September 2010 is mainly due to pupils taking time off for religious festivals.

The effectiveness of provision

Most of the teaching observed was either barely satisfactory or inadequate, and very little good teaching was seen. All of the inadequate teaching observed was in Years 3 to 5. The most common feature of weak teaching was low expectations, which resulted in pupils being given unchallenging tasks and lessons having a pedestrian pace. Teachers constantly missed opportunities to encourage high quality work, correct mistakes or make explicit how much they wanted pupils to have completed in set times. Too often teachers praised pupils even if they had made minimal effort. Teaching was often inflexible, not responding to the slow pace of learning by adjusting either the teaching input or the task given to pupils. A number of pupils told inspectors that their work was easy. In some lessons pupils finished quickly and then did not know what to do next.

In one of the few lessons where teaching was good there was a focused effort by the teacher to clearly explain to pupils what they were expected to learn. Expectations were high and the teacher effectively matched different expectations to different ability groups, for example explaining to the more able group that they had to use prepositions in their sentences. This lesson moved quickly and the teacher did not accept work from pupils that fell short of his expectations for what they could do.

Teachers had produced detailed plans for English and mathematics lessons. However, there are inconsistencies in the way teachers plan for these two subjects; for example, some plan for three days of the week while others plan for the whole week. Although plans are detailed there is still a lack of clarity as to what is expected in terms of learning for the different ability groups. It was difficult to see how assessment data were informing planning or how teachers were building on the pupils' previous learning in the week. Planning for other subjects was less detailed and there was very little explanation of how lesson activities would be matched to the needs of the different ability groups within the class.

All teachers shared the learning objective with pupils at the beginning of each lesson and some referred back to them at different stages in the lesson. While this was helpful, learning objectives were not always challenging or matched to different ability groups. Pupils' work was marked. In most books some marking helped pupils understand what they had learnt and explained what they needed to next in their learning. However, too often marking was brief and in a few cases consisted of just a tick.

The role of the teaching assistant in lessons is not sufficiently well developed. Very rarely did inspectors see teaching assistants effectively helping pupils to make

progress. Teaching assistants were often keen to help but needed more direction from teachers as to what they should expect pupils to have achieved by the end of the lesson.

Plans to develop the curriculum have not yet resulted in any action that has led to improvement.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure the quality of teaching is good or better and eliminate all inadequate teaching so that all pupils make good or better progress throughout both key stages, but particularly in Key Stage 2 – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following the previous inspection, the absence and subsequent resignation of the headteacher delayed improvement work and little was done early on to establish the rapid progress needed to improve the quality of teaching. Once the resignation of the headteacher was confirmed, work to improve the school gained more momentum. The acting headteacher led this work and has demonstrated good leadership skills. He has driven through improved assessment tracking and timetabled a rigorous monitoring schedule. The robust system for tracking pupils' progress is allowing targets, based on assessment data, to be set for teachers which clearly spell out the expectation that they are responsible for raising standards. The acting headteacher has role modelled good practice which has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. Since 1 September the associate headteacher has provided good support for the acting headteacher and ensured that vital work is being done to put a rigorous performance management process in place. Not all teachers have been given performance targets yet and this continues to delay the procedures to hold teachers to account. However, both the acting headteacher and the associate headteacher have robustly monitored teaching and have not flinched in giving tough messages where they have been needed.

The four phase leaders, each with a responsibility for leading two year groups, are now more aware of their roles and responsibilities. Since September they have become more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, but as yet the impact of their work is minimal. They are more acutely aware of the need to give robust feedback to their colleagues that clearly identifies both strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Most, but not all, have begun training to improve their leadership skills but as yet there is no discernible impact. There are no clear, short-term goals for phase leaders, for example what they need to do by the end of the autumn term, and therefore they are not held to account robustly enough. There is a lack of consistency in how phase leaders hold staff in their phase to account and how they drive through improvements.

The school's improvement plans do not have enough ongoing targets in order to regularly measure progress. As a result there is not enough clarity as to what progress is expected on a half-termly or monthly basis. The lack of regular targets makes it difficult for phase leaders, the acting headteacher and the governing body to evaluate the progress the school is making.

The governing body is not holding the school to account. In the past it has relied too heavily on the information provided by the headteacher without question or challenge. Since the previous inspection there have been only two school improvement committee meetings to give governors, through meeting with local authority staff and senior school leaders, the opportunity to discuss the progress the school is making. Governors' training on roles and responsibilities, where they could discuss their part in improvement work, has been arranged but has not yet taken place.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management – inadequate.

External support

The local authority was slow to tackle the issues raised at the time of the last inspection and the actions taken since have not adequately ensured that the school's pace of improvement is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection the local authority have only monitored the quality of teaching once, and found it to be at least satisfactory. This judgement does not resonate with the findings of this monitoring visit. The local authority's statement of action outlining improvement work was evaluated by HMI when first submitted to Ofsted, who then informed the local authority of weaknesses in the plan. A small number of amendments have been made to the plan, outlining milestone targets. However, although the local authority has met one of the additional milestone targets – that 'all lessons seen by July 2010 were satisfactory or better' – evidence from this monitoring visit shows that the quality of teaching has since regressed. The education improvement adviser has supported the work of the acting headteacher and associate headteacher by helping to put systems in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that school improvement planning is clearly focused on short-term goals for all staff.
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the performance management cycle is complete.
- Commence work to improve the curriculum.