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Mrs Evans
Causeway Green Primary School
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Dear Mrs Evans

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Causeway Green Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 February 2011 with Jennifer Batelin, 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 October 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise their attainment, particularly of boys at Key Stage 1 and all pupils at Key Stage 2 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - providing pupils with work that really stretches them, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that leaders monitor teaching and learning robustly, to identify and tackle weaknesses.
- Improve marking and other feedback given to pupils so that they know precisely what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least average, to improve the progress of pupils who miss too many lessons.

Special measures: monitoring of Causeway Green Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 15–16 February 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work over two days and scrutinised a range of school documents. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the consultant headteacher, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a range of senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils. Pupils were observed at break times and generally around the school. Inspectors also spoke to a number of parents and carers who were present at the beginning and the end of the school day.

Context

The number of pupils on roll has risen to 403. The school continues to be led by the former deputy headteacher in the capacity of acting headteacher alongside the consultant headteacher. The local authority has been successful in appointing a substantive headteacher who will take up post in April 2011. During the summer term there are plans to facilitate the newly appointed headteacher to work with the school alongside the existing leadership. Since the last visit, three staff have left the school, two newly qualified teachers have taken up post and leadership has been further strengthened by the appointment of an acting deputy headteacher. One teacher has returned from long term illness and another is due to return shortly. One teacher remains on long term sick-leave.

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

Work on speeding up pupils' progress has continued well throughout the school. The school's own data on pupils' attainment show that in all classes pupils are making at least the progress which is expected of them. In some classes, particularly in the upper part of the school, pupils are making much better progress than is typically seen nationally. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are making the accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics, needed to make up for the 'lost ground' of previous years. This reflects the strong focus the school has given to reading, writing and number work over the last two terms. Careful monitoring of pupils' progress and well- directed intervention programmes have done much to secure this good progress. Teachers understand the importance of developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. One teacher said, 'If pupils can't say what they mean they can't write it either.' In the best lessons, these skills continue to improve because teachers encourage pupils to articulate their views to the whole class or in pairs and groups.

Attainment continues to rise across the school and is confirmed by the standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books. School data indicates that the proportion of pupils on track to reach the expected levels in reading and writing is broadly average. However, attainment is less strong in mathematics and at the higher levels

in writing. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress overall. They make good progress in developing their communication and language skills from levels that are generally well below those expected for their age when they enter the school. This is because staff encourage children to talk about what they are doing. Children are confident, talk enthusiastically about their work and play well together.

The school continues to keep good records of pupils' attainment. Data are analysed well for Years 1 to 6, but less well for the Early Years Foundation Stage, to identify areas of success or weakness. Consequently, the senior staff have a very clear view as to how much progress each class has made over the current academic year.

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment, particularly of boys and all pupils in Key Stage 2 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - providing pupils with work which really stretches them, especially in writing and in mathematics – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and this aspect continues to be a strong feature of the school. Pupils enjoy their time at Causeway Green and show interest and enthusiasm for learning. Clear expectations of conduct lead to good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils speak about their school as a place where they feel safe and have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Pupils' attitude in the upper Key Stage 2 classes is particularly good; they are welcoming and courteous to visitors, listen attentively and ask thoughtful questions. During group work, pupils work together co-operatively and maintain their concentration and interest. When teachers call the class together their response is instant. Despite a small number of lessons when teachers talk for too long, pupils make every effort to concentrate and follow their teacher's instructions. When working in groups and pairs, pupils co-operate well and share equipment sensibly.

The school adopts rigorous procedures to try to improve attendance, with strong signs of success. Attendance is currently 94.1%, significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school is now, rightly, focusing on the relatively small number of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and whose attendance is well below average.

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

- Improve attendance so that it is at least average, to improve the progress of pupils who miss too many lessons – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The school has worked hard in continuing to improve the quality of teaching. There is a far greater consistency in the application of classroom routines such as the use of self-assessment 'fans' which pupils regularly use to show the teacher whether they have understood an idea. Of the 11 lessons seen during this monitoring visit, two were outstanding, seven were good and two were satisfactory. No inadequate teaching was observed.

This overall picture of good teaching and learning has resulted in pupils making far more progress than they have in the recent past. Overall, the majority of teachers are now demonstrating a marked degree of confidence in organising and structuring their lessons. All classrooms are organised well to support pupils' independent learning. Planning has improved and is far more consistent from lesson to lesson. There is generally a clear reference to learning objectives and expected outcomes. Teachers are consistently more explicit about the learning that will take place. Some very good and exciting teaching was observed in Year 3 when, for example, pupils made exceptional progress in acquiring knowledge relating to money and how to give change. Similarly, in Year 6 the teacher's very high expectations and high quality exposition enabled all groups to make outstanding progress when exploring ways of moving a Level 4 piece of writing to a Level 5. Some better questioning techniques are starting to be seen which assess, support and extend pupils' learning, but this good feature is not consistent. Some teachers accept pupils' responses to questions which are often brief and expressed in partial sentences. Where teaching is less effective, learning and progress are held back because some teachers do not plan adequately enough for the range of abilities in the class, with the result that high attaining pupils are sometimes not challenged enough. In a minority of lessons, teachers talk too much, which limits the time pupils are actively and independently learning.

A good system of assessment is in place to record information on pupils' learning, which is well understood and used by the senior leadership team. The senior leaders meet with each teacher termly to discuss individual pupils' progress. Underachieving pupils are identified and intervention programmes implemented. Pupils' work in literacy and numeracy is marked meticulously with encouraging comments. The use of peer and self assessment is very skilfully used and consistent reference to pupils' targets makes explicit what they should do next to improve. Consequently, most pupils know the targets they are working towards in lessons. The 'WALT (We Are Learning To ...)' and 'WILF (What I'm Looking For ...)' approach provides them with a good guide during lessons.

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

- Improve marking and other feedback given to pupils so that they know precisely what they need to do to improve their work – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher provides very strong leadership and knows the school well because of rigorous and systematic monitoring of teaching, learning and achievement. She is supported very well by the consultant headteacher and staff and there is a clear sense of collective responsibility and teamwork. The acting headteacher is receiving good support, especially from her senior team who are growing in confidence and increasingly providing the necessary support and leadership to others in the school. The focus for all managers is now very clearly on improving the quality of teaching and learning and thus the standards achieved by pupils. Effective subject leadership, including the first class management of numeracy and literacy, is leading to steadily improved attainment and accelerating progress. The Interim Executive Board, very well led by its chair, has a very good understanding of what the school is doing to improve and are increasingly holding the school to account for its outcomes. Systems of self-evaluation are robust and a good improvement plan is in place to address the issues identified by the last inspection report.

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

- Ensure that leaders monitor teaching and learning robustly, to identify and tackle weaknesses – good.

External support

There are good, positive relationships between the school and the local authority and they are working together well to improve provision and outcomes in the school. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and the leadership team has been further strengthened with the appointment of an acting deputy headteacher. The School Improvement Partner (SIP) has coordinated a range of effective support to the school. For example, support has been provided on assessment and pupil target setting, and joint lesson observations with middle leaders and the SIP and chair of the Interim Executive Board have been particularly valuable.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the increased rate of improvement seen on this visit is maintained and that the good practice is embedded across the work of the school.