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17 February 2011

Mrs Kate Rowlands
The Headteacher
Blaise Primary School and Nursery
Clavell Road
Bristol
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Dear Mrs Rowlands

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blaise Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 February 2011, 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 second 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that pupils reach the levels of which they are capable by:
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and writing skills in English, their problem-solving skills in mathematics and their investigation skills in science
 - making sure that at the end of each lesson, pupils have a clear idea of what they have learnt, whether they have fulfilled their personal objectives and what they need to do to improve further.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in the very large majority of lessons by:
 - making sure that there is a sharper match between work set and the different abilities of pupils, particularly the more able
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.
- Improve pupils' overall rate of attendance so that it is consistently 94% or better by:
 - working in partnership with parents to improve their awareness of the impact of absence
 - monitoring attendance carefully and taking action where appropriate.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders are consistently accountable for pupils' attainment and progress in the subjects for which they are responsible
 - developing the role of governors so that they have the skills and knowledge to be better able to hold school leaders to account.

Special measures: monitoring of Blaise Primary School and Nursery

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 February 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including seven part lessons and an assembly, briefly sampled a few lessons with the headteacher and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, scrutinised documents, met with the headteacher and senior leaders, a range of staff, a representative group of pupils, the chair and vice chair of governors and the school's improvement partner.

Context

Three teachers have left the school since the last monitoring inspection. Two new teachers have joined the school, while another teacher has increased their teaching commitment from part time to full time.

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

Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, undertaken during this inspection, indicate that pupils' progress is improving across the school. Increased opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills and effective one-to-one interventions are having a positive impact on their writing, particularly in the lower age classes. The new thematic approach to curriculum planning is also providing pupils with more opportunities to solve problems, and be more active and inquisitive in class. During the last term, the science and design and technology-based topic has given pupils many opportunities to develop their skills of scientific enquiry, through asking questions, designing and carrying out experiments and reaching conclusions from the results they obtain. The inconsistency in progress across year groups, identified during the last monitoring inspection, is being reduced. However, pupils in the lower age classes continue to make better progress than older pupils.

The accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment has continued to improve, due to robust systems of moderation. Assessment data are currently collected and analysed three times a year, although progress in English and mathematics needs to be monitored more regularly in order to identify underachievement quickly. The data indicate that current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain Key Stage 2 tests results that will be closer to the national average than was the case last year.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- ensure that pupils reach the levels of which they are capable – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The importance of good attendance continues to have a high profile within the school. For example, good attendance is celebrated each week in assembly and this is welcomed by pupils. The leadership team is also working closely with the parent council working party to identify strategies to improve attendance. As a result, a leaflet has been produced by the parent council informing all parents of the importance of good attendance. Robust procedures are in place to monitor and encourage good attendance and the school continues to work well with the senior education welfare officer to encourage persistent absentees to attend. As a result of these actions attendance is improving, but remains well below average. A number of appropriate actions have also been taken to improve pupils' punctuality at the start of the school day. These are having a positive impact, although lateness to school remains an issue for leaders to address.

There is a calm, welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the school and the vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons. However, if teachers talk for too long a few pupils become distracted. Those very few pupils whose behaviour can at times be challenging are well supported and managed by staff. Pupils report that behaviour in the school continues to improve. They say they feel safe and that incidents of bullying are rare, but when they do occur staff deal with them well. Pupils appreciate the increasingly effective way that staff listen to their views and respond to the suggestions they make. Pupils' work is also attractively displayed and celebrated around the school and this is raising the quality of the learning environment and pupils' enjoyment of school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve pupils' overall rate of attendance so that it is consistently 94% or better – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection. All the teaching in the school is at least satisfactory and there is higher percentage of good and better teaching than was seen during the previous inspection. This improvement in teaching is being driven by a robust process of lesson observations, with clear and helpful advice being given to staff about how to improve. They have been supported in this improvement by a teaching and learning consultant modelling good practice lessons and by effective peer support.

Teachers are energetic and encouraging. They plan lessons well, and are increasingly providing pupils with good opportunities to be actively involved in their learning. There has been an improvement in the way teachers are matching work to the range of ability of pupils in their class. Teaching assistants are also improving their effectiveness in supporting pupils with special education needs and/or

disabilities in lessons, with a number of examples of good practice observed during this visit. However, teachers still need to ensure that lessons provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils in their class. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long or give pupils too long to complete activities and this slows the pace of learning.

The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is improving. In the best examples, pupils respond to written questions posed by teachers and this consolidates and develops their learning well. However, this good practice is not consistently in place across the school.

Support for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is being developed well. The progress of these pupils is being tracked and evaluated well and teachers and teaching assistants are being held increasingly accountable for the progress they make. Those pupils who are making less than expected progress have been identified and additional support provided in order to speed up their progress. This is beginning to have a positive impact on their progress, particularly in Key Stage 1.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in the very large majority of lessons – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, with the support of senior leaders, has continued to lead the school well and has successfully driven improvements since the last monitoring inspection. Systems of self-evaluation are robust and the leadership team has a strong understanding of the strengths of the school and the improvements that still need to be made. All staff have been actively involved in the development of the new school vision 'Everyone shines at Blaise' and this reflects the high expectations of the school.

The creation of curriculum teams has helped to raise teachers' confidence and expertise and has been a strong driver in the school's improvement. The science leader, with some effective external support, has raised the profile of investigative science in the school and introduced a new assessment scheme. Overall, there has been a good improvement in the role of subject leaders to monitor and evaluate provision and pupil outcomes. Leaders of the core subjects now monitor lessons and pupils' work, and analyse pupils' progress data. They have produced good subject evaluation documents, which have been shared with the governing body.

Since the last monitoring inspection the governing body has reorganised their committee structure, with governors now allocated to committees that match their individual areas of strength. This new committee structure is having a positive impact on the quality of the governing body's monitoring and evaluation of the

school's work. Minutes of meetings provide evidence of an increasing and appropriate level of challenge from the governing body to senior leaders.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers – good.

External support

The school and the local authority continue to work well together to address key areas for improvement identified by the last full Ofsted inspection. The school improvement partner has coordinated a range of effective support to the school. For example, support has been provided for teaching and learning, attendance, governance, science and behaviour management.