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Mrs Kate Rowlands
Headteacher
Blaise Primary School and Nursery
Clavell Road
Bristol
BS10 7EJ

Dear Mrs Rowlands

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blaise Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit with Mr Bill James, additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 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 – satisfactory.

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed to the school.

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 first monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 October 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including nine lessons and an assembly, 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 Improvement Partner.

Context

Six new teachers joined the school in September 2010 and two teachers have also returned from maternity leave who were not in school at the time of the last inspection. A new Chair and Vice-chair of Governors have been elected and one new governor has joined the governing body. The current Year 6 has been split into two classes, increasing the number of classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 from 13 to 14.

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

The leadership team have instigated a number of strategies to raise attainment in writing across the school. The impact of these actions was evident in a significant improvement in Year 2 pupils' attainment in writing in the 2010 teacher assessments. However, attainment in reading and mathematics remained very similar to levels seen last year. Results of the Year 6 national tests in English and mathematics were also very similar to those attained in 2009. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 remains well below the national average.

The accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment has improved due to more robust systems of moderation. Assessment data are collected from teachers three times a year and stored in a central electronic system so that pupils' progress can be tracked over time. Analysis of these data, combined with lesson observations undertaken during this inspection, indicate that pupils' progress is improving and attainment is rising. However, there is still inconsistency in the progress being made by pupils across the year groups, with pupils in the younger age classes making better progress than older pupils. This is, in large part, due to the fact that older pupils are lacking some basic literacy and numeracy skills due to earlier underachievement in the school. The attainment of girls in writing in the 2010 Year 6 national tests was above that of boys, while boys' attainment was higher than girls' in mathematics. The senior leadership team are taking some effective action to address this issue.

Judgement

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

Some well-judged initiatives are being used to improve attendance. For example, a parent council working party has been established to raise parents' awareness of the importance of good attendance, and assemblies are regularly used to reward pupils who attend regularly. Good procedures are also in place to monitor and encourage good attendance. The school is being effectively supported in this work by a senior educational welfare officer. Although attendance did not improve last academic year, the school's actions are beginning to take effect this term. Pupils' attendance since the start of this academic year is currently 94.9%.

Pupils report that behaviour in school has improved over the past year. This is reflected in a fall in the number of pupils being excluded from school. The school's involvement in the 'Rights Respecting' project is making pupils aware that their behaviour can affect the learning of others and this is having a positive impact on the way they behave. There is a harmonious atmosphere in the playground with pupils playing well with each other. Pupils say they feel safe and that if any incidents of bullying do occur they are dealt with well by staff. Most pupils behave well in lessons although when activities fail to fully engage some pupils they become distracted and their low-level disruptive behaviour can affect their learning.

Judgement

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 inspection. Teaching in all the lessons observed during this inspection was at least satisfactory and in some cases it was good. However, too much teaching remains satisfactory in order for pupils to quickly catch up 'the ground lost' during their earlier years at the school. This improvement in teaching has been driven by a robust process of lesson observations. Joint observations undertaken during this inspection confirmed the accuracy of the senior leadership team's judgement of the quality of teaching. A range of professional development opportunities, such as teaching improvement groups, visits to other schools and consultant support, have helped improve practice. A rigorous appointment process has also led to the recruitment of some strong new teaching staff to the school.

All lessons are well planned around clear learning outcomes for pupils. In the best lessons, engaging activities that actively involve pupils in learning are delivered at a

good pace. Pupils are interested in learning because work is based around real life contexts that are relevant to them. However, in the satisfactory lessons, teachers occasionally talk for too long and this slows the pace of learning. Tasks and activities in these lessons are also often not well matched to the range of ability of pupils in the class.

The curriculum has been developed well since the last inspection. A thematic-based curriculum was introduced in September 2010 centred around key areas of learning. Curriculum content is now delivered through contexts that are more interesting and relevant to pupils. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning and their enjoyment of school. Further opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and writing skills in English and their problem-solving skills in mathematics are being established and a range of intervention programmes are beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has revised and streamlined the process of identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Clear lines of communication with teachers and teaching assistants have also been established so that they are now better able to support pupils in lessons. An improved system to monitor the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in place, with teachers and teaching assistants being held more accountable for the progress these pupils make. These improved systems are beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 1.

Judgement

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 – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders are clearly focused on raising achievement across the school. They have effectively secured the support of staff, who talk positively about the improvements being made. High expectations are evident in the challenging targets set for pupils and a good central tracking system has been established so that the progress towards these targets can be monitored. This system is now being used effectively to identify underachieving pupils and provide them with appropriate support. Systems of self-evaluation are robust and a good improvement plan is in place to address the issues identified by the last inspection report.

The creation of nine curriculum teams has strengthened the role of middle leadership within the school. Senior leaders are now holding middle leaders more accountable for the progress made by pupils. There has been a satisfactory improvement in the role of some subject leaders to monitor and evaluate provision

and pupil outcomes. However, some subject leaders are new in post and are still developing their skills. Subject leaders need to be more involved in lesson observations and in monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work.

Following the Ofsted inspection, governors carried out an in-depth self-evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses. As a result they have reorganised their committee structure and re-allocated governors to committees to make best use of their skills. This has enabled governors to be more effective in their role. However, these changes are very recent and have not yet had time to prove fully effective. Governors are satisfactorily monitoring the implementation and impact of the school's action plan to address the issues raised by the last Ofsted inspection.

Judgement

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

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action addresses the issues raised by the previous inspection well and it is closely linked to the school's improvement plan. 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. The School Improvement Partner has coordinated a range of effective support to the school. For example, support has been provided for the governing body, teaching and learning, English, the SENCO and managing pupils' behaviour.