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9 December 2010

Mrs Barnfield
Shaw Hill Primary School
Anthony Road
Alum Rock
Birmingham
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Dear Mrs Barnfield

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Shaw Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 7 December 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 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 – 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' achievement by:
 - raising pupils' attainment and improving progress especially in writing in all key stages and in mathematics by the end of Year 6
 - increasing the proportion of pupils who exceed the levels expected for their age in all subjects and in all key stages
 - raising pupils' attainment and progress in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better and, as a matter of urgency, ensuring that all inadequate teaching is eliminated
 - ensuring that work is carefully matched to the capabilities of more able pupils so that they receive sufficient challenge.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels and in all key stages use the self-evaluation information more rigorously to:
 - identify precisely the reasons why pupils' attainment is not rising
 - set challenging targets for improvement
 - monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils
 - hold staff to account for pupils' progress.

Special measures: monitoring of Shaw Hill Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on Tuesday 7 December 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents, pupils' work and assessment information and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils and parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, and with a representative from the local authority.

Context

Two members of the teaching staff left the school at the end of the summer term. Two new teachers joined the school on permanent contracts at the start of this term. One is teaching in the Nursery and the other in Year 5. They are both newly qualified teachers who have already completed part of their induction period in other schools before joining Shaw Hill. The teacher at Key Stage 1 who had already returned from maternity leave at the time of the last monitoring visit, and was working part time, is now teaching full time. Another teacher at Key Stage 1 is currently on maternity leave. Her position is being covered by a teacher with a temporary contract that lasts to the end of this school year.

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

National comparisons with last summer's results at Years 2 and 6 confirm the spurt in pupils' progress made over the course of the last school year and identified during the last monitoring visit. In particular, there was an increase in pupils performing at the higher Levels 3 and 5 in English and mathematics, lifting attainment at Year 6 just above the significantly below average range for these two subjects for the first time in several years. Progress this term, however, has not accelerated in the same measure and remains patchy and inconsistent across all year groups, and also between subjects and groups. For example, while there is evidence of pupils from Pakistani backgrounds doing well, there is more variable progress among those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, the school's analysis of data shows that most children gained broadly average levels across all areas of learning on leaving Reception last year, but that few attained at the higher levels. The proportion of good progress continues to be strongest in reading, and illustrated in the pleasure with which pupils spoke of their favourite books. However, while progress is still slower in writing than it is in reading and mathematics, greater attention than before to sentence construction and correct grammar, in written and spoken language, is starting to have an impact.

Pupils are keen to learn, and their steady and diligent attention to their work is a marked feature of most lessons and makes a strong contribution to their daily progress. The oldest pupils, for example, were eager to write in the different styles of spy thriller, ghost story or romantic fiction, while pupils in other year groups readily tested out their mathematical knowledge in attempting problems of increasing difficulty. Indeed, pupils speak enthusiastically about learning, with English and mathematics among their most popular subjects. They especially enjoy a challenge, such as the 'Super Challenges' in mathematics, and spoke of how they would like even more demands made of them in lessons. Parents and carers express mixed views about their children's progress. Some are happy and pleased with its pace, while others feel it is not fast enough.

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

- raise pupils' achievement, especially in writing in all key stages and in mathematics by the end of Year 6, increasing the proportion of pupils who exceed the levels expected for their age in all subjects and in all key stages and raising pupils' attainment and progress in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage – *satisfactory*.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in their continuing good behaviour. Quieter working habits in lessons were much more in evidence during this visit than the last, with just some occasional lapses in concentration during whole-class discussion or when pupils had finished their tasks and had nothing more to do. A rise in the proportion of persistent absence has been tackled successfully, bringing it to just below the national average. Although some absence during the festivals of Eid has lowered overall attendance this term, it is otherwise broadly average and boosted by high levels of attendance during October. Pupils' social and cultural development benefits from the equal attention given to learning about the traditions of Eid, Christmas and Diwali. Friendly respect for others is clear in the ease with which boys and girls, and pupils from minority ethnic groups within the school – such as those from Somali families – work together to share ideas or solve a problem.

The effectiveness of provision

A levelling off in pupils' progress this term is reflected in a similar dip in the proportion of good teaching and learning. During this visit, the large majority of teaching was found to be satisfactory and, while no inadequate teaching was seen, the school's monitoring has identified instances of inadequate practice. Nevertheless, there have been some valuable improvements to the quality of teaching this term. For example, activities and routines in the Reception classes are better organised, resulting in a much quieter and calmer atmosphere than before and more purposeful learning. The systematic, step-by-step approach to teaching mathematical processes

is much more widely spread and enables pupils to pick their way with increasing confidence and accuracy through their work, especially where more than one calculation is needed to arrive at the answer. Subject vocabulary is also promoted well in English and mathematics, helping pupils to explain how they have worked something out in a particular way, or why they have chosen this word rather than another to enhance a piece of writing.

The work of teaching assistants has been targeted this term, and the introduction of the new marking policy has ensured that pupils are receiving much more detailed feedback about their work and how it could be improved. These last two initiatives are at a relatively early stage, however, and not yet fully embedded. While some teaching assistants seize the opportunity to question pupils carefully, or contribute to whole group discussion – even to point out tactfully any mistakes – others are still too passive, or correct inaccuracies themselves rather than probing and encouraging learning. The new approach to marking has been widely adopted across the school, but is stronger in English than mathematics. It is also not always clear if suggestions to pupils about what to do have been completed and followed up. Despite the stronger match of work to pupils' needs and abilities, there are still lingering issues with the level of challenge, most particularly for the more able. In particular, sometimes the work is too easy in the first place, so that it is finished quickly and these pupils then mark time. On other occasions, opportunities are missed to question, or take contributions from, a wider group of pupils in order to probe and respond to their level of understanding and move them on. While pupils really enjoy lively teaching, full of fun and humour, they miss vital explanations when the pace is too fast and time is not taken to check that all are keeping up.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better and, as a matter of urgency, ensuring that all inadequate teaching is eliminated; ensuring that work is carefully matched to the capabilities of more able pupils so that they receive sufficient challenge – *satisfactory*.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders continue to work closely and productively with the local authority and to build with steadfast determination on key foundations laid in the course of last year. Senior leaders have again moved swiftly to address weaknesses in practice. Satisfactory teaching is now much more secure than it was in the past and senior leaders recognise that they must now ensure more consistently good teaching. The work they have undertaken with teaching assistants this term, and to monitor and establish effective marking has started that process. Importantly, senior staff are now strengthening the next tier of leadership within phase teams, so that checks on pupils' progress, classroom support and the

leadership of improvement are more widely accountable. All these strategies have not yet had enough time to influence provision and outcomes to a marked degree. Nevertheless, as a consequence of these initiatives, senior leaders are coming to appreciate the wider dimensions of their role. In particular, they understand their duty to develop the leadership skills of others and are starting to reshape their activities to monitor and keep abreast of the work and impact of this new team.

Staff accountability in general has been maintained through frequent assessment. This information has enabled the school to identify the minority of pupils making slow progress this term, identify appropriate interventions and set challenging targets for the coming year. The governing body has increased its monitoring activity, including visits to school and discussion with staff. This information has encouraged greater questioning of and challenge to the school's performance, although the governing body has yet to set up procedures and protocols for monitoring and sharing information from these visits. Discussion about financial matters is increasing the governing body's involvement in strategic matters.

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

- ensure that leaders and managers at all levels and in all key stages use the self-evaluation information more rigorously to: identify precisely the reasons why pupils' attainment is not rising; set challenging targets for improvement; monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils; and hold staff to account for pupils' progress – *good*.

External support

Robust support from the local authority has been maintained and is much valued by the school. Discussion with local authority representatives has been rigorous and challenging and senior leaders have greatly appreciated the chance to talk through strategies for improvement. As planned, probing discussion with the School Improvement Partner about pupils' achievement has been extended to include teachers in year groups other than Years 5 and 6. The partnership school appointed by the local authority worked valuably with staff in the monitoring of the new marking policy. There have also been checks this term on the quality of teaching and learning, and local authority representatives have attended meetings of the governing body. The local authority now feels that, given the recent improvements to attendance, the school no longer requires focused assistance from the education welfare support team.