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11 March 2011

Mrs A Smith
Headteacher
Brewster Avenue Infant School
Brewster Avenue
Woodston
Peterborough
PE2 9PN

Dear Mrs Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Brewster Avenue Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2010. 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**

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure pupils are kept safe at all times by regularly checking that relevant policies, strategies and procedures are up to date.

- Raise the achievement of all pupils and especially the boys by:
 - improving the proportion reaching at least the levels expected for their age, particularly in writing
 - ensuring that pupils of average and higher ability reach the levels that they are capable of.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum planning by:
 - making full use of assessment information to set tasks that consistently challenge groups of different abilities
 - ensuring that the planning of lessons clearly identifies exactly what pupils are to learn in specific activities.

- Improve school self-evaluation procedures by:
 - making better use of the tracking of pupils' progress to identify exactly where improvement needs to be made
 - ensuring that the quality of planning, teaching and learning is regularly monitored and rigorously evaluated to identify areas for improvement
 - extending the role of the governing body in fulfilling the statutory duties placed upon them.

Special measures: monitoring of Brewster Avenue Infant School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 9 March 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, including those for safeguarding, and met with the headteacher, senior leadership team, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection two class teachers have left. A teacher who joined the school after the last inspection on a temporary contract in November 2010 was appointed by the governing body to a permanent post in January 2011. A second permanent appointment was made in January 2011. A newly qualified teacher was appointed prior to the previous inspection. The new headteacher and two assistant headteachers took up their posts in September 2010 just prior to the inspection.

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

The 2010 teacher assessments show that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 improved. In reading and mathematics they were broadly average and in writing they were above. While boys' attained standards which were similar to those attained by boys nationally, they performed less well than girls in school in all three subjects. The gap between the standards attained by girls and boys in the school was wider than between girls and boys nationally in all three subjects.

Evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and the school's assessment data show that current standards are rising. This is the result of improvements in teaching and learning. In addition, a higher proportion of pupils, including boys in each year group, are reaching the levels expected for their age than previously, most noticeably in Year 2. The school has started to take suitable action to address weaknesses in writing, for example by providing additional support to underachieving pupils in Year 2. This is contributing to raising the attainment of boys and pupils of average ability in this year group. Although standards in Year 1 are improving they remain well below expectations. Too many pupils are working below the expected levels for their age, especially in writing, because of previous weak provision and disruptions with staffing.

Evidence from lesson observations show that rates of progress have improved and are satisfactory for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Occasionally they are good, where teaching is stronger. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to make at least satisfactory progress. In the

rest of the school, progress continues to vary across classes, year groups and between groups of pupils. For example, evidence in school confirms that progress is better in Year 2 because of the targeted support for pupils and where there is some strong teaching. The progress made by boys is improving where teachers are becoming more skilled in planning lessons which capture their interests and use a range of strategies to ensure they are as actively involved in their learning as girls. In all year groups higher attaining pupils are not always given activities which are sufficiently challenging. Consequently, they do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

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

- Raise the achievement of all pupils and especially the boys - satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and sometimes good in lessons and around school. Occasionally, in lessons where pupils find the work too easy or have to sit for too long listening to the teacher, pupils become distracted. Importantly, pupils say they now feel more safe and secure at school. Pupils were particularly positive about the new arrangements for staggered playtimes which they say have resulted in the playgrounds being less crowded and as a consequence there are 'less bumps and bruises.' They also spoke enthusiastically about the electronic bollard which controls access through the school gate and means they no longer have to worry about cars entering the school site.

Attendance remains broadly average. A new system has been put in place to monitor punctuality. This has made the school aware of an issue with lateness. School leaders are putting procedures in place to encourage pupils, parents and carers in the importance of coming to school on time. It is too early to evaluate their success.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and ranges from satisfactory to good. The majority of lessons observed by inspectors were satisfactory. There is not yet enough consistently good teaching to accelerate progress in all year groups and narrow the gap between the achievement of boys and girls. With support from the local authority improvements have been made to lesson planning and teachers are increasingly identifying what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Staff are beginning to make better use of assessment information to match activities to the needs of individual pupils. However, though activities are now better matched to pupils of average ability, the activities for higher attaining pupils continue to lack sufficient challenge.

Lesson observations confirmed some consistently effective aspects of teaching emerging in lessons. These included the more skilful use of questioning to extend pupils thinking and speaking skills, use of talk partners to give pupils time to develop their own ideas and the effective targeting of additional adults to support individuals and groups of pupils in classrooms. In contrast, the pace of learning slows when pupils lose valuable learning time waiting to take their turn to answer a question or to begin a task. Feedback to pupils, including teacher's marking, gives praise and acknowledges success but it does not consistently identify and correct errors or tell pupils clearly what they need to do to improve.

The school has started to review its curriculum planning so that it more closely meets the needs and interests of all pupils, particularly boys. However, this is in its early stages. Effective examples seen include topic themes and resources relating to football and outer space to successfully engage boys. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been further developed. Staff have put in place a consistent approach to teaching children the sounds that letters make and to recording children's progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum planning – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

In a short time the headteacher has unified the staff team and strengthened the partnership with the governing body. A shared ethos has been established, with a clear focus on addressing the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The headteacher has produced a useful school action plan which is reviewed and updated regularly. However, it does not always include precise enough details about what improvements will look like for pupils, or how long they will take to achieve so that they can be accurately measured and closely monitored by school leaders and checked by the governing body. Similarly, reports from the headteacher to the governing body and the local authority about the actions taken and the progress the school is making do not always provide evidence of the impact on how well all pupils are doing.

The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team are being developed satisfactorily, with training and support provided by the local authority. This has resulted in improvements to procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. As a consequence, school leaders and the governing body have a more accurate picture of the schools strengths and weaknesses. A formal timetable for the regular and rigorous implementation of these monitoring activities has yet to be established. The headteacher and assistant headteachers have, for example, undertaken lesson observations and monitored teachers planning. As a result, they

have been able to identify areas for development in the quality of teaching, though the feedback given to teachers does not always give them the precise guidance they need to improve their practice. They are making better use of assessment information to identify where pupils may be underachieving and therefore to more closely target suitable levels of support. There is more work to be done to analyse this information in terms of all groups in school.

The governing body have responded positively to the areas for improvement and taken a particularly strong lead in improving safeguarding. Governors' roles and responsibilities are developing satisfactorily and there is evidence of an increasing awareness of what needs to be done. Governors have formed an Ofsted working group to monitor progress and though it is in its early stages, evidence confirms that they are beginning to ask school leaders challenging questions about their work.

Statutory requirements for safeguarding are now met. All reasonable steps have been taken to ensure pupils' safety on the school site. All required policies and procedures have been updated and implemented. They are underpinned by a timetable for their regular review. All staff have received appropriate training for child protection and first aid. Consequently they have a clear understanding about safety procedures and their roles and responsibilities for ensuring the safety of pupils.

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

Improve school self-evaluation procedures – satisfactory

- Ensure pupils are kept safe at all times by regularly checking that relevant policies, strategies and procedures are up to date – good

External support

The local authority has provided a suitable range of support, the impact of which has been good with regard to safeguarding and satisfactory with regard to the other areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Staff say that they have particularly valued the support offered by local authority Learning and Teaching Consultants for literacy and mathematics. The local authority has agreed to make further modifications to its action plan in order to bring precision to the success criteria so that success can be gauged by the extent of impact through precisely identified measurable improvements in provision, outcomes or effectiveness of the school. This is to include measurable success criteria against which to judge the quality of teaching at regular intervals and how the local authority proposes to support and build the school's capacity to lead and manage the improvement of teaching and the curriculum. More detail is to be given in regard to the support to be given to the governing body. The modified plan is to be sent to the lead inspector one month after the first monitoring visit.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified in the inspection of September 2010.