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10 March 2011

Mr Richard Thompson
Headteacher
Sherdley Primary School
Mill Lane
Sutton
St Helens
Merseyside
WA9 4HA

Dear Mr Thompson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sherdley Primary School

Following my visit with Eithne Proffitt, additional inspector, to your school on 8 and 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2009. 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 the previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 St Helens.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Wall
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Sherdley Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject coordinators, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a small group of parents and carers, and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since January 2011 a temporary teacher has been employed to provide cover for a member of staff in Key Stage 1 who is absent.

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

The much needed sense of urgency brought to the school by the headteacher continues unabated. Initiatives planned at the time of the last monitoring inspection are now being implemented. This is bringing about rapid improvement in pupils' progress and is helping them become more effective learners. The school continues to tackle effectively a legacy of underachievement and poor progress. Since the last monitoring inspection, leaders and managers have embedded further the procedures for tracking pupils' progress so that the school now has a realistic and more accurate grasp of pupils' attainment and progress towards demanding targets.

The overall attainment of the current Year 6 cohort on entry to Year 3 was lower than that of other cohorts, both past and present. School data show that their level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is set to be significantly higher at the end of this academic year than was the case in 2010 when that cohort was, in comparison, generally much more able. Data also show how securely progress is improving: nearly all pupils are now making at least the expected levels of progress and a significant number are exceeding them. Data for boys' attainment in the current Year 6 show that it is expected to be lower than that for girls'. However, this is linked directly to there being a significant proportion of boys with special educational needs and/or disabilities. School data for other cohorts in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the Early Years Foundation Stage show a similar picture of strongly improving attainment and accelerating progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils say, and observations confirm, that behaviour continues to improve. The school has provided relevant training for its lunchtime supervisors since the previous monitoring visit. Pupils say that this has led to much better behaviour at lunchtimes and is adding further to them feeling very safe in school. Pupils say that they are enjoying school a lot more because lessons are more interesting and challenging. The school council now meets regularly with groups of parents and carers to coordinate better whole-school fundraising activities and to provide more effective channels of communication. Pupils' increasing levels of competence in literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT), coupled with their growing levels of confidence and their improving attitudes to learning, mean that they are increasingly well-prepared for future success.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning continues its rapid improvement. Teaching and learning observed during the monitoring inspection show a rise in the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding. Teaching is making increasingly effective use of assessment data to plan and deliver challenging tasks that are appropriate to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils. The use of group and pair work is becoming embedded in nearly all lessons to involve pupils more actively in their own learning. The quality of marking is now consistently better in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum remains broad and balanced. It continues to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' skills in ICT are improving because teachers are using it more effectively in their teaching and the school is focusing more sharply on using it across different subjects.

The physical environment of the school has been improved to provide pupils with a more stimulating and welcoming working environment. New resources for outdoor learning are being used increasingly effectively in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The sense of purpose brought by new leadership to the school continues to impact strongly. Teachers are now never unnecessarily away from their classes; pupils are benefitting from the greater continuity for learning this provides. Leaders and managers are setting increasingly high expectations to embed ambition and drive

improvement faster. Effective teamwork in the pursuit of improvement is growing palpably. Increasingly rigorous monitoring is ensuring that policies are implemented consistently across the school. Leaders and managers are evaluating the work of the school with increasing confidence and accuracy. They are using the outcomes with increasing skill to raise attainment and accelerate progress for all groups of pupils and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Subject managers are growing in confidence and are now fully clear about their roles and responsibilities. Increasingly strong links with a network of local primary schools are being forged. Regular meetings of teaching staff from the different schools are adding significantly to the accurate moderation of pupils' work. Teachers are also starting to share resources and ideas on how to improve teaching further.

Governors continue to provide strong support. They are becoming increasingly confident in asking pertinent questions to hold the school to account. They are seeking more information and attending relevant training to improve their knowledge and ability to hold the school rigorously to account.

The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of adults working with children meet requirements.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of self-evaluation – good
- improve the equality of opportunity for all pupils – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide regular support to the school through its Intensive Support Programme. There is regular, ongoing support from local authority teachers in literacy and numeracy. The local authority is carrying regular, in-depth reviews of the school to support the process and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation.

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - inadequate teaching is eradicated
 - the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate
 - the curriculum fully matches the needs and abilities of all pupils
 - teachers spend sufficient time teaching to make an impact on pupils' learning.

- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders make good use of the data available to set the school's priorities for improvement and to check the effectiveness of their actions against the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - communicating the school's priorities effectively to all staff
 - ensuring that agreed policies and actions are adhered to consistently
 - evaluating the impact of teachers' management time against the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - ensuring that the governing body receives information which accurately reflects the school's progress against the key priorities for improvement.

- Improve equality of opportunity for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their time at school.