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Nathalie Bull
Headteacher
William Morris Primary School
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Surrey
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Dear Ms Bull

Special measures: monitoring inspection of William Morris Primary School

Following my visit with Grace Marriott, additional inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 May 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 November 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 – good

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 Merton.

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the level of challenge and expecting more from the pupils in lessons
 - ensuring that pupils have as many opportunities as possible to gain fluency in writing in a range of subjects
 - reducing the use of worksheets.
- Improve the quality of pupils' learning and raise the quality of teaching by:
 - implementing a programme of rigorous and frequent classroom observations
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are effectively deployed to promote learning
 - improving the consistency and quality of marking, to ensure that all pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - expecting all adults to provide stimulating questioning to enable the children to use language effectively
 - planning activities that start from the children's own interests
 - providing richer and more varied learning experiences with greater opportunities for children to explore the natural environment.
- Take more robust action to improve the attendance of pupils overall and particularly of the small minority of persistent absentees.

Special measures: monitoring of William Morris Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 May 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and other senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils and the local authority School Improvement Partner.

Context

There have been significant changes in the context of the school since the last inspection. The previous, interim, headteacher has left and the school is now led by an executive headteacher who is a local leader of education (LLE). As an LLE, the executive headteacher supported the previous headteacher throughout the spring term. The school has entered into a soft federation with Singlegate Primary School, a local outstanding school led by the executive headteacher. An interim associate headteacher has also been appointed and this post will become permanent in September. Some senior staff at Singlegate Primary School are supporting the leadership at William Morris. Advanced plans are in place for the two schools to enter into a hard federation in September 2011 by merging the two governing bodies into one.

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

School data confirm that most pupils, especially those in Years 5 and 6, have made accelerated progress since January of this year. This is the result of the creation of a stimulating learning environment coupled with the provision of considerably improved and focused teaching. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve national expectations in English and mathematics by the end of this year. In relation to their below average starting points, this is evidence of good progress. Similarly, Year 2 pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment data show that the school is on track to achieve, and in some cases exceed, appropriately challenging targets set by the local authority.

Pupils behave admirably well in lessons and are enthusiastic about their learning. They respond thoughtfully to their teachers' questions and work well in groups and when discussing their learning with 'talk partners'. Pupils are more productive in lessons because teachers have higher expectations of them and usually set them a variety of interesting tasks and activities. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoyed the challenge of using problem-solving target boards to demonstrate their understanding of factors and multiples. Many Year 2 pupils worked well independently when they used clear success criteria to write a report about a chosen animal. Stimulating displays show the practical application of basic skills, for example using the concept

of symmetry to design the princess's dress for a royal wedding. Pupils show increasing awareness of the purpose of their learning and the factors that help them to know if they have been successful. Sometimes. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to explain their thinking or use better visual resources to deepen their learning, especially in the case of pupils who are less able. Pupils' writing has shown significant improvement because they get the opportunity to write in different contexts and to assess each other's work with a star and a wish. Scrutiny of books shows that pupils write in descriptive prose, explain the reasons for their predictions in science, make interesting diary entries in history and, in Years 5 and 6, write a balanced argument on a controversial issue. Raising attainment in English, and writing in particular, has rightly been a key focus of the school this term and this has paid clear dividends.

Judgement

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

- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils behave very well in class and around the school. Their attitudes to learning are very good, strengthened by a stimulating learning environment coupled with the calming influence of soothing background music in classrooms. Pupils are friendly and polite and keen to talk about their learning. Behaviour has improved markedly as a result of the school's focus on creating a purposeful learning community. For example, a whole-school assembly is held every morning to promote the practical application of William Morris's core values.

The school has now instigated more robust procedures to encourage good attendance. There are clear procedures in place which are implemented consistently by all members of staff. Attendance also has a high profile among pupils through weekly targets and a variety of attendance awards. As a result, attendance has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now just above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also been significantly reduced as a result of effective actions taken by the attendance officer in partnership with the local education welfare service.

Judgement

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

- Take more robust action to improve the attendance of pupils overall and particularly of the minority of persistent absentees – good

The effectiveness of provision

Regular 'drop ins' by the executive headteacher are having a demonstrable impact on teaching because teachers get clear and effective feedback that is rigorously followed up. All teachers have benefited from observing outstanding teachers at Singlegate Primary School deliver lessons in writing and numeracy. This has been followed up by coaching and modelling by senior leaders to develop good practice. As a result, although most teaching is satisfactory, many teachers are rapidly developing good pedagogical skills and the confidence to take risks in applying the new strategies they have learned to engage pupils. Good teaching was seen in Years 5 and 6 where teachers used effective strategies to engage and motivate pupils, for example through the sharp and imaginative use of interesting audio and video clips to create a stimulus for effective writing.

Assessment strategies are more firmly embedded in the small proportion of good teaching seen and this is enabling these teachers to provide good levels of challenge for all groups of pupils, including those with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, in the majority of cases both teachers and teaching assistants are still developing their understanding of how to use assessment information purposefully in order to target support most effectively. For example, teachers do not always use different targets and measures of success to structure the learning well for pupils of varying abilities and to challenge them to achieve as well as they can. Teaching assistants make a satisfactory contribution to the quality of education, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. However, they do not have access to the detailed provision mapping they need to target their support more effectively. Although marking is regular and sometimes diagnostic, especially in literacy, pupils are not given individual learning targets coupled with next steps guidance to support them in making further and more sustained improvements.

The quality of planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now more detailed and systematic, giving better guidance to teachers on how to organise children's learning. Tracking systems have improved but are still at a developmental stage, and show that children make satisfactory progress by the end of Reception. Although children have a wider range of learning experiences the outdoor area is not fully integrated into teachers' planning and is therefore not exploited well enough. The quality of questioning is improving although adults are still missing opportunities to develop this in greater depth. The support from the Singlegate Primary School Early Years Foundation Stage leader is effective and she has a secure understanding of what needs to be done to build on these initial developments.

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

- Improve the quality of pupils' learning and raise the quality of teaching – satisfactory
- Improve the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher has had a considerable impact in transforming the culture of the school in a relatively short span of time. She is embedding ambition and driving improvement with increasing success and has galvanised the support of staff. Leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching through a range of monitoring activities. They can also point to examples of where teaching has improved as a result of this monitoring and more direct coaching. As a result, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has improved rapidly in recent months and is now broadly average.

Data systems are developing well and the recent round of assessments are enabling leaders and teachers to have a clearer picture of the progress of every individual in the school. This information is being used by teachers with increasing effect to plan to meet the needs of their pupils and to set up interventions for those that are underachieving. At a strategic level it is being used well by leaders to plan for the next academic year by targeting resources where they are most needed. For example, a fundamental restructuring of teaching assistants is currently being undertaken. Pupil progress meetings are scheduled for this term to help leaders and teachers to gain a shared understanding of the issues in each class. However, this work is at an early stage of development. The collection and use of data in the Early Years Foundation Stage has moved forward at a satisfactory pace. The consistent support from the Singlegate Primary School Early Years Foundation Stage leader is proving effective because she has a detailed awareness of what needs to be done to transform children's learning experiences in both the Nursery and Reception classes.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have made good progress in addressing the issues identified at the last inspection. They have clear and effective plans to address the areas of weakness and targets are generally sharp enough to enable the success of actions to be measured clearly. The governing body is now responding to the needs of the school with more urgency. Governors have received support which is enabling them to be more confident in holding the school's leaders to account, for example in relation to raising attainment and the quality of teaching.

External support

The local authority has shown good strategic direction regarding the future of the school and its work has been underpinned by an effective statement of action. As a result, the school has worked very productively with its partner school with which it is federated. This has considerably developed the skills of the teachers and both schools have found it to be a fruitful relationship. The School Improvement Partner has also provided effective support, for example in her monitoring work with the executive headteacher and in improving the awareness of governors of their key responsibilities.