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26 May 2011

Mr Christopher Hassall
Executive Headteacher
Slater Primary School
Slater Street
Leicester
LE3 5AS

Dear Mr Hassall

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Slater Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 and 25 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - introducing robust assessment procedures that give teachers the necessary information to ensure that lessons are challenging and matched closely to pupils' prior attainment
 - ensuring that basic skills are reinforced effectively through work in all subjects
 - ensuring that the curriculum is modified effectively to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language
 - planning work that motivates and inspires pupils and promotes enjoyment in learning.

- Improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils by:
 - introducing effective induction procedures for the many pupils who join the school throughout any given year
 - taking a more rigorous approach to promoting regular attendance.

- Strengthen arrangements for securing pupils' welfare and safety issues by:
 - taking action, by April 2010, to rectify all health and safety issues identified by the local authority
 - introducing effective systems to identify, support and record the progress of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable in any way.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - embedding ambition throughout the school and introducing rigorous procedures for checking on standards and quality for planning for school improvement
 - giving all leaders the training, time and resources they need to drive up the quality of teaching and learning
 - ensuring that governors oversee the work of the school effectively and collect the necessary first-hand evidence to hold the school to account for what it achieves.

Special measures: monitoring of Slater Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 May 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the executive deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, a group of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, teachers and teaching assistants.

Context

During the monitoring inspection, governors were interviewing candidates for the post of headteacher. Expectations are that the new headteacher will take up their post in September 2011. In addition, two teachers with leadership responsibility have been appointed. They will take up their posts in September 2011. The proportion of pupils that join and leave the school outside of normal admission dates has risen considerably and is much higher than average.

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

School assessment information shows that progress in mathematics since the last visit has continued to accelerate. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have made progress that is narrowing the gap rapidly between their achievement and national expectations. In reading and writing, the rate of progress is accelerating, but it has varied between year groups. In some years, such as Years 2 and 5, it is good, but in others it is slower. This means that attainment in English is generally lower than in mathematics.

In Year 1, pupils have made varied progress since the last monitoring inspection. They have experienced weak teaching and learning at various times since September 2010. A period of effective teaching and learning in which they made rapid progress ended recently. Currently, lessons fall far short of meeting the needs of pupils because they are occupied with tasks that have a limited impact on their learning.

School information shows that, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the large majority of children start school with skill development that is lower than national expectations. This year, in most areas of learning, they have made much better progress than previous cohorts of children. The majority of children are on course to enter Year 1 with skill development that is in line with national expectations.

However, their communication and literacy skills are less well developed because the progress they make in these areas is slower than in others.

While progress over time in writing remains inconsistent, work in books shows that the quality of writing and marking is improving as a result of training that staff have benefited from since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils now have better planned activities to practise their literacy skills in other subjects.

Groups of pupils such as those learning English as an additional language and those that have special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than other groups. This is because assessment information is used accurately to tailor good quality additional activities that specifically meet their needs.

Pupils' scientific investigational skills are not developing as quickly as they could be because they have insufficient opportunities to carry out practical science experiments and investigations.

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

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2 – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

An enriched curriculum and effective care, guidance and support have enabled pupils to demonstrate a much stronger contribution to the community. For example, the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. This week they are taking part in the selection of a new headteacher. In addition, they have been consulted about policies, such as the safeguarding policy and risk assessment procedures.

The effectiveness of provision

The strongest improvement to teaching since the last visit has been in the Year 2 and 3 class. The quality of teaching is now much closer to the better teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessment information is used well to target children and provide a stimulating range of activities for them to take part in that is resulting in their better progress. It is still not as successful at ensuring that when children are taught in a large group they make the expected progress. These are important times of the day, as the focus is on developing language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils are organised into ability sets for English lessons, and all teachers work from a highly structured curriculum. This has resulted in some of them having an incorrect perception that they must teach the lesson strictly as instructed by the scheme of work rather than adapt it to meet the individual needs of the pupils. In the lessons where this happens, teachers do not pay enough attention to the different abilities

of pupils so that often they all do the same task. This means that work is insufficiently challenging for the more able and sometimes too difficult for the least able, even when supported by a teaching assistant.

Procedures to check and improve attendance are now robust and implemented swiftly. However, attendance has remained similar to last year. One reason for this is the considerable rise in the number of pupils who join and leave the school outside the normal admission dates. There are now very robust safeguarding policies and procedures, such as those to safeguard pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and for health and safety within the school. The assistant headteacher has greatly strengthened these procedures, establishing strong links with partners to secure pupils' well-being.

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

- improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils – satisfactory
- strengthen arrangements for securing pupils' welfare and safety issues – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive leadership team and the assistant headteacher now provide a safe, secure, and improving environment for learning. As a result of this, nearly all pupils are well-behaved and there have been no exclusions since September 2010.

The assistant headteacher is effective at checking and improving the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the developments to the quality of writing are due partly to his regular check of pupils' work and the recommendations he has made about how teachers can make improvements. Teachers have benefitted from a great deal of training to improve their teaching. However, some of the procedures to check whether the training is resulting in better quality teaching and learning are less sharply focussed than they could be.

The governing body has successfully taken all the necessary steps to secure school leadership for the future. It demonstrates a much greater ability and understanding of its role. It has rightly identified the importance of ensuring that its procedures for checking on the work of the new headteacher are robust as well as supportive.

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

- improve leadership, management and governance – satisfactory.

External support

The governing body has benefitted from good training and guidance to secure stable leadership for the school. Generally, the teachers have continued to benefit from the good quality of support and advice from local authority consultants and advisers. However, where teaching and learning is weakest, this support has had insufficient benefit as there is little evidence of improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure, by the next visit, that teaching and learning in Year 1 appropriately meets the needs of the pupils.
- Ensure that teachers adapt the English curriculum where appropriate so that it meets the learning needs of all pupils.
- Strengthen the science curriculum so that pupils regularly practise their investigation skills.
- Ensure that the governing body implements robust procedures to check on and support the work of the new headteacher.