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Mrs Rowlands
Headteacher
Blaise Primary and Nursery School
Clavell Road
Henbury
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Dear Mrs Rowlands

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blaise Primary and Nursery 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that pupils reach the levels of which they are capable by:
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and writing skills in English, their problem-solving skills in mathematics and their investigation skills in science
 - making sure that at the end of each lesson, pupils have a clear idea of what they have learnt, whether they have fulfilled their personal objectives and what they need to do to improve further.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that they are consistently good or better in the very large majority of lessons by:
 - making sure that there is a sharper match between work set and the different abilities of pupils, particularly the more able
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.

- Improve pupils' overall rate of attendance so that it is consistently 94% or better by:
 - working in partnership with parents to improve their awareness of the impact of absence
 - monitoring attendance carefully and taking action where appropriate.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders are consistently accountable for pupils' attainment and progress in the subjects for which they are responsible
 - developing the role of governors so that they have the skills and knowledge to be better able to hold school leaders to account.

Special measures: monitoring of Blaise Primary School and Nursery

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

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including seven lessons, toured the Early Years Foundation Stage and briefly visited six lessons with the headteacher. He also scrutinised documents and met with: the headteacher and senior leaders; a range of staff; a representative group of pupils; a group of parents; the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair; and a local authority adviser.

Context

The number of pupils on role has slightly increased since the previous inspection. Two members of teaching staff, on supply contracts during the previous inspection, have now been appointed to permanent positions. There are currently three vacancies on the governing body.

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

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below the levels expected for their age. This summer, children will leave the Reception class with levels of skills that will be closer to those expected for their age than has been the case in the past. Inspection evidence and the school's tracking data also indicate that the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 is improving, particularly in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils on track to attain the expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is above the figure seen last year and broadly similar to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils on track to attain the higher Level 3 remains below average in all three areas of learning. The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 is also increasing, although there remains some variation in progress across the year groups. For example, progress in Year 6 is better than in Years 3 to 5. As a result of this improved progress, attainment is rising in this key stage, although faster in reading and mathematics than in writing. Year 6 pupils remain on track to attain Key Stage 2 tests results that will be closer to the national average than was the case last year. They are on track to achieve their challenging targets in mathematics but not in English.

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

- Ensure that pupils reach the levels of which they are capable – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance continues to show a trend of improvement. Attendance from the start of the academic year until this inspection was 93.9%. This is 1.4% above last year's attendance figure. The leadership team and learning mentor have kept a continuous focus on improving attendance, constantly reviewing practice and altering their approaches as necessary. Improvements in attendance have been driven by robust monitoring, celebration of good attendance and effective partnership work with parents. Improvements to the school's curriculum and the quality of teaching have also increased pupils' enjoyment of school and had a positive impact on their attendance. Despite the leadership team having taken a number of appropriate actions to improve pupils' punctuality at the start of the school day, the proportion of pupils arriving late has increased since the previous inspection. This remains an issue for school leaders to address.

There is a calm and welcoming atmosphere in the school. The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school site. Staff continue to support and manage well those few pupils whose behaviour can at times be challenging. Pupils state that behaviour continues to improve and that they enjoy school.

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

- Improve pupils' overall rate of attendance so that it is consistently 94% or better – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to steadily improve. The proportion of lessons in which teaching is good or better has increased since the previous monitoring inspection. Teachers are more effectively using assessment information to plan lesson tasks that match pupils' skills and abilities, particularly in English and mathematics. There has been a clear focus on improving the level of challenge in lessons for more-able pupils since the previous inspection. Teaching assistants generally provide effective support to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, occasionally, when teachers are talking to the whole class, their time is not well used. Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic and most lessons now contain activities that actively involve pupils in learning. However, on occasions, some teachers can talk for too long and this slows the pace of learning. Teachers are giving increasingly helpful feedback to pupils at the end of lessons and when marking their work about what they have learnt and what they need to do to improve. However, there remains some variation in the quality of written feedback to pupils.

Support for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities continues to develop well. As a result, their progress is improving at a similar rate to that of their peers. Effective systems are now in place to track their progress and those who are identified as underachieving are being provided with effective support. The new thematic approach to curriculum planning is providing pupils with more opportunities to practise and develop their problem-solving and investigative skills. Phonics-based interventions programmes in the earlier years of the school are also having a positive impact on developing pupils' reading and writing skills. A greater range of opportunities is being provided for pupils to produce extended pieces of writing across all year groups.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that they are consistently good or better in the very large majority of lessons – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher is providing the school with a clear sense of direction that is focused on raising achievement, improving teaching and learning and promoting the importance of success for all pupils. The senior leadership team similarly shares this sense of purpose and determination to make the school successful. Teaching is being robustly monitored. As a result, teachers have clearly identified areas for improvement and they are receiving effective support from an external consultant and from good in-school practitioners. Systems to track the progress of pupils in English and mathematics have been developed well and the quality of assessments is becoming increasingly robust. The school is now able to monitor and evaluate the progress being made by different groups of pupils in these subjects. Increasingly effective action is being taken to improve the progress being made by all groups of pupils. Systems to track the progress of pupils over time in science now need to be developed. An annual cycle of monitoring and evaluation is now in place which places an appropriate level of importance on monitoring by subject leaders. As a result, they are being held increasingly accountable for pupils' achievement. For example, they have recently written evaluation reports for their subjects that have been shared with the governing body.

There is a strong partnership between the governing body and the senior leadership team with regular strategic planning meetings between the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair. Governors are now more actively involved in monitoring and evaluation and they are beginning to provide the leadership team with an appropriate level of challenge as well as support.

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

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers – good.

External support

The local authority monitors the implementation and impact of the school's and local authority's action plan well through the project review group. This group also effectively coordinates support to the school. The local authority has provided the school with good support for teaching and learning and subject leadership since the previous inspection.