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30 June 2011

Mrs S Morrison
Headteacher
Eyres Monsell Primary School
Simmins Crescent
Leicester
LE2 9AH

Dear Mrs Morrison

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Eyres Monsell Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 June 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 February 2011. 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 – inadequate.

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 Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2011

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress to raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - raising the overall quality of teaching to at least good
 - ensuring that work is more closely planned to match pupils' needs and interests, particularly for boys
 - providing frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - reviewing and revising current procedures taking into account the views of pupils, parents and carers and staff
 - re-establishing an agreed code of conduct of behaviour, rewards and sanctions
 - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the agreed strategies.

- Strengthen the school's self-evaluation by:
 - focusing on pupils' progress in all monitoring and evaluation activities making judgements on progress explicit
 - fine-tuning the monitoring and evaluation skills of middle leaders.

- Improve attendance by:
 - working more closely with parents and carers whose children attend less regularly
 - making parents and carers more aware of their responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Special measures: monitoring of Eyres Monsell Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28–29 June 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Adviser. Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching and learning and evaluated a sample of pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. The governing body is receiving support from an experienced Chair of Governors of a successful school within Leicester City. The school has recruited two new teachers to its leadership team. One of these was able to take up her post in June. The other will start in September.

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

Achievement remains inadequate in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. The school has some evidence of better progress since the previous inspection. For example, in Year 2, additional literacy support resulted in groups of pupils making accelerated progress in reading and writing. However, in the lessons observed in Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' progress was never better than satisfactory. Such progress is not good enough to enable the pupils to fill in the gaps in their learning and raise attainment to be in line with the national averages by the time they leave the school. Attainment is particularly low in Years 3, 4 and 5. Writing is the weakest area. The school analyses closely the performance of groups of pupils. This analysis has identified underperformance by boys in reading and writing in Years 1, 2 and 4. Progress is better in the Early Years Foundation Stage because adults provide interesting activities indoors and outdoors that, while developing skills in all areas of learning, prioritise early language and literacy skills. Past data show that, although children join the school with skills well below those expected they are achieving closer to the national averages by the time they start Year 1. However, by the end of Year 1, pupils' attainment is once more well below average.

The previous inspection report asked the school to develop the curriculum so that there were plenty of activities that motivated boys and that all pupils had more opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects. The school is at an early stage of responding to this area for improvement and it is too early to measure the impact on pupils' progress of actions taken.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- accelerate the rate of pupils' progress to raise attainment in English and mathematics – inadequate.

Other pupil outcomes

Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now at 93.1%. This gain is the result of improved communications with parents and carers reminding them of their responsibilities. The school also now takes firmer action where there are causes for concern. Other evidence of success in this area include the reduction in persistent absence from six pupils to two pupils and the reduction in the number of pupils whose attendance is between 80% and 90% from 37 to 26. These improvements are in line with the milestones set in the post-inspection action plan. Working with the educational welfare officer, the school has initiated 'Blitz days'. These target both absence and poor punctuality. The school's late book shows a reduction in the number of latecomers.

The behaviour of pupils and the school's management of behaviour have both improved since the previous inspection. A group consisting of staff, governors and parents have worked on a new behaviour policy which will be implemented at the start of the new school year. Since the spring term, improvements in behaviour management have seen a great reduction in the number of exclusions and the number of pupils referred to the inclusion room during the school day. No pupils have been excluded during the summer term. Instances of low-level disruption in lessons were rare in the lessons observed during the monitoring visit.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve pupils' behaviour – satisfactory
- improve attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults effectively combine the direct teaching of skills, such as letters and sounds, with imaginative activities that capture the children's interest. For example, the topic on mini-beasts prompted both girls and boys to write independently as well as make models from plasticine and junk materials depicting their discoveries. The outdoor area provides well for the development of physical skills and creative play. Access to information and communication technology enables children to consolidate their early literacy and numeracy skills.

The satisfactory lessons observed in Key Stages 1 and 2 had sufficient strengths to allow pupils to make adequate progress but there is much scope for improvement, particularly in raising the standards of low-attaining pupils. One barrier to better learning is a lack of clarity in lesson plans about the precise skills or knowledge the pupils are expected to gain. Learning objectives are often very broad, for example, 'To describe familiar settings', even in mixed-age classes where the range of needs is particularly wide. In such lessons, the focus is on pupils completing tasks rather than gaining new skills or better understanding. Consequently, pupils are not always clear about what they are learning despite the prominence in planning given to 'What I am learning today' and 'What I am looking for'. Pupils are able to share what they are doing but not link the activity to their learning targets.

The quality of questioning is inconsistent. In the least effective lessons, answers to questions required only brief responses without explanation or justification. Relatively few pupils answered and the questioning rarely led to discussions or supplementary questions that deepened understanding. On occasions, adults cut short pupils' responses. This approach did not enable teachers to challenge and promote individual pupils' understanding or to track their progress. There were missed opportunities to assess how well pupils were learning during a phonics session because adults did not check pupils' responses, written on their individual whiteboards, and because there was no expectation that pupils would sound out words or phonemes clearly and correctly when required. The session included a range of activities but the teacher's determination to cover everything planned actually slowed the pace of learning for a significant proportion of the group. In some of the pupils' writing books, there are examples of good opportunities for extended writing and helpful marking. However, it is also clear that the provision in a minority of classes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is inappropriate. For example, their books show that they are, on occasions, asked to complete lengthy writing tasks far beyond their capabilities and practise mathematics skills inappropriate to their current grasp of place value and calculation. The many additional interventions and one-to-one support for low-attaining pupils reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. However, these additional targeted resources do not compensate for inadequate provision when working with the rest of the class.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's leaders and managers are ambitious to secure improvement. A recent survey of staff conducted by the local authority showed that staff morale and confidence in the school's leaders have improved since the previous inspection. New arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision and outcomes demonstrate a more systematic approach to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring of lessons is more regular and feedback helps teachers to reflect upon the effectiveness of their practice. There is emerging evidence that follow-up observations check the impact of the previous feedback. However, where

satisfactory or inadequate teaching have been observed, the recorded areas for development are not sufficiently detailed or prioritised as targets for improvement, and there are no review dates for following up whether teachers have improved their practice. Similarly, the impact of teaching on the pupils' learning and their progress in lessons is not given sufficient priority in written records of monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, although there are weekly scrutinies of work, these have not eradicated serious shortcomings in practice. For example, in a small minority of classes, work set for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is inappropriate, incorrect answers are marked as correct and the school's handwriting and target-setting policies are not implemented consistently. When book scrutinies conclude that a pupil's progress is 'good' there is no explanation of the new skills or knowledge the pupil has gained.

The roles of the subject leaders in driving improvements are underdeveloped. A new subject leader for mathematics joined the staff in June and a new special educational needs coordinator will take up her post in September. The subject leader for English has benefited from training to enable her to fulfil her responsibilities. She has conducted paired observations with the School Improvement Adviser. She has overseen the implementation of strategies to raise attainment in reading and conducted a work scrutiny. She has developed a calendar for more regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation for the next school year. At present, however, she does not attend pupil progress meetings and does not hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in English. Similarly, subject leaders are not held to account for pupil outcomes in their areas of responsibility.

The governing body is coming to terms with the changes needed to eliminate weaknesses and improve the quality of education. The new Chair has a wealth of experience in school improvement and minutes of the one meeting he has attended demonstrate a readiness to challenge practice. There is, however, much to do in order for the governing body to hold the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils. Currently, governing body meetings do not focus sufficiently on how well the school is tackling the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection. There is a lack of clarity about how the governing body should make a more positive contribution to school improvement.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- strengthen the school's self-evaluation – inadequate.

External support

The local authority's statement of action to support the school meets requirements. Local authority consultants provided a range of satisfactory support although their efforts have yet to make a sufficiently positive impact on improving the quality of

teaching and learning. The behaviour support team and the education welfare officer have assisted the school well and helped secure improvements in behaviour and attendance. Monitoring of the school's performance by the local authority and the School Improvement Adviser is rigorous and accurate. Their reports give the governing body and the school's leaders helpful pointers for improvement.