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20 October 2011

Ms M Buckland  
Headteacher  
Sutton Park Community Primary School  
Greatfield Road  
Kidderminster  
Worcestershire  
DY11 6PH

Dear Ms Buckland

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sutton Park Community Primary School**

Following my visit with Sally Hall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18–19 October 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The school, including representatives from the governing body and the local authority, was a participant in a pilot scheme to increase the pace at which schools come out of special measures. An HMI experienced in schools causing concern work, visited the school and discussed the plans that the school and local authority have made to ensure it improves.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 – satisfactory.

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 Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

**Clive Kempton HMI**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The following areas were identified for improvement during the inspection which took place in March 2011:**

Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science across the school, including in the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
- ensuring that assessment procedures give teachers the necessary information to make sure that lessons are challenging and matched closely to pupils' prior attainment
- ensuring that the curriculum is modified effectively to meet the needs of all pupils and in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the growing number of those who speak English as an additional language
- planning work that motivates and inspires pupils and promotes their enjoyment of learning.

Improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of all pupils by:

- taking a more rigorous approach to promoting regular attendance
- ensuring that effective systems are in place to support and record the progress of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable
- ensuring that pupils are prepared well for living in a multicultural United Kingdom.

Improve leadership, management and governance by:

- embedding ambition throughout the school, through introducing rigorous procedures for checking on pupils' attainment and progress, the quality of provision and planning effectively for school improvement
- giving all leaders the training, time and resources they need to significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning
- ensuring that systems to track pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2 are based on accurate assessments and are used effectively by all teachers when planning lessons, to meet the needs of all pupils and raise attainment
- ensuring that the governing body oversees the work of the school effectively and collects the necessary first-hand evidence to hold the school to account for what it achieves
- ensuring, as a matter of urgency, that the school builds leadership capacity to enable staff to make a telling contribution to school improvement.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Sutton Park Community Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18-19 October 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff with posts of responsibility, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, three groups of pupils, a group of parents and carers and two representatives of the local authority. They observed 12 lessons and saw every member of staff teach. As part of this monitoring inspection, the procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were checked and found, following a few minor amendments, to meet requirements.

#### **Context**

Since the inspection in March 2011, there has been significant staff turnover. Seven staff have left and a similar number have joined the school, including one newly qualified teacher. The deputy headteacher, on long-term sick leave at the previous inspection, has subsequently left the school and has been replaced, initially with a seconded assistant headteacher and, currently, with an experienced acting deputy headteacher, both seconded from other schools. A further member of staff will leave the school at the end of the Autumn Term 2011. The number of pupils on roll has fallen from 230 to 224 for reasons unconnected to the school being in special measures.

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

When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage their skills and knowledge are well below expectations. Attainment remains below the national average by the time they leave the school. Generally girls attain higher standards than boys with the exception of mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. In the past, pupils have made inadequate progress as they move through the school.

Since the inspection in March 2011, attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved across all areas of learning, although to lesser degree in communication, language and literacy, particularly writing. Key Stage 1 assessments and Key Stage 2 results from national tests taken by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2011 demonstrate progress is beginning to accelerate. Attainment has improved in English and mathematics with the exception of writing in Year 2, where results have declined compared to previous years. These improvements have been the result of a concerted effort by the headteacher and seconded assistant headteacher to raise attainment in these two classes and to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Staff morale is high.

There is now a more systematic method of tracking individual pupils' progress, although there is as yet insufficient evidence of its impact, as this first monitoring visit took place before the first termly assessments were completed. Assessment information was collected in July 2011 which will be used as the baseline for evaluating pupils' progress in each year group. Individual and class progress will be measured at six points during the year. Current school performance data broadly indicate that pupils in Key Stage 2 are making quicker progress than the younger pupils in Key Stage 1. There are more lower-attaining pupils and fewer higher-attaining pupils in the school. These two groups are making slower progress than the middle-attaining pupils, although school data suggest that this trend is beginning to change with the increased focus the headteacher and senior staff are placing on monitoring and supporting the progress of all pupils. The majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those younger children with speech and language difficulties are making better progress due to the targeted support they receive.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment in English, mathematics and science across the school, including in the areas of learning in the early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

At the previous inspection, attendance was 92.7%, below the national average. The whole school year, 2010 to 2011, recorded attendance at 91.3%, still well below the national average of 94.7%. The latest data show that attendance is improving. Attendance since the start of September 2011 is 96.7%, compared to 94.8% for a similar period last year. The local area has a history of poor school attendance and persistent absence. A few parents and carers condone absence and pupils are absent from school for the occasional day here and there, which significantly impacts on their attainment and rates of progress. The acting deputy headteacher now meets weekly with the education welfare officer and purposeful dialogue is developing with identified families to raise their understanding of the importance of good attendance. Of concern is the high proportion of pupils who are still persistently absent, a proportion much higher than the national average. The school is currently developing more effective strategies for encouraging good attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. In 2010 to 2011, there were 16 pupils identified as persistent absentees over the year. During the current term to date, the number compared with a similar period last year has reduced significantly from 24 to 12. Punctuality to school remains an issue for some families. On the day of the inspection, two pupils were registered as late for school. This figure has reduced considerably from an average daily figure of six in the last reporting year.

Pupils' behaviour is improving as lessons become more interesting and pupils remain more focused on the learning activities. In some lessons, teachers have worked hard to create a wider range of stimulating activities. Pupils report that they now enjoy the more practical nature of these lessons. They also report that the behaviour in the playground is much better and 'pupils are more careful now', although there are too few activities and games for children to play at break and lunchtimes.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Improved attainment is a result of the stronger focus by senior staff on improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. There is now a stronger learning culture in all lessons visited, and relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Teaching quality is better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Twelve lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or the acting deputy headteacher. All members of staff were observed. Eighty three per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better and 25% good or better. While an improvement, these figures are below the school's own ambitious targets. Pupils report that there is a noticeable increase in how much they are learning in English and mathematics especially in consolidating areas of previous misunderstanding, for example, fractions and decimals in mathematics.

All teachers are working hard and planning conscientiously. In the best lessons observed, tasks are well-matched to individual needs; a wide range of communication aids are used to support those with specific communication difficulties; there is very good modelling of expectations by the teacher; and teaching assistants are used well. Pupils are excited about their learning and enjoy the opportunities for independent work. Books are regularly marked. In the less successful lessons, the opposite is true. Teachers still talk too much; the learning objectives are not clear and learning gains are not checked frequently enough throughout lessons. Questioning is insufficiently probing or challenging; pupils lose interest and not enough learning takes place. There is still too much inconsistency between classes and some teachers have to spend too long going over skills and concepts that should have been taught in the previous class. This slows down the overall pace of learning.

The headteacher and senior staff have a strong development focus on improving the quality and consistency of teacher assessment. It is too early to judge the impact of the full range of assessment strategies on pupils' learning. This remains a key priority for the school.

A mathematics curriculum audit in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is beginning to identify where there are gaps in pupils' understanding. This is informing a revised mapping of mathematics with younger pupils. There is a developing understanding among staff of the need for progression in mathematics and how each class should build on and consolidate learning from previous classes.

However, activities in mathematics still do not take account of the needs of all learners in all lessons. The whole curriculum is still under review to ensure that there is a stronger balance of different subjects and experiences. There has been a stronger focus since the previous inspection on literacy and numeracy.

The progress and support provided for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities both in the main school and in the communication centre has also been a focus for the school's development. An impressive, temporary special educational needs coordinator has reviewed the provision made for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and ensured that all staff are aware of the pupils with specific individual needs in their class. However, the school has a higher-than-usual percentage of lower-attaining pupils, and teachers are not taking sufficient account in their planning of the wide range of ability in their classes, including that of lower-attaining pupils. The leadership's oversight of the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is now much stronger and coherent.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory
- improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of all pupils – satisfactory

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The result of the school being placed in special measures has had a positive impact on identifying deep-rooted issues, improving outcomes and increasing the life chances of all pupils. A large number of staff have left the school for other posts, and practically a whole new staff has been appointed. There is an acceptance that the school needs to change. The headteacher leads with passion, commitment and determination to embed ambition and drive improvement. She has successfully managed the large number of staffing changes. There is a strong commitment from the new staff to respond to the challenge of change and to the headteacher's high expectations to raise pupil outcomes.

Those working in the temporary leadership structure are working well together. Those in management posts are rising to the headteacher's challenge, although to a lesser extent in mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a clear understanding by all senior staff of the extent of the task in hand. To this extent, self-evaluation is accurate. A detailed action plan has been written by the headteacher that charts the actions and success criteria for the next few years. This plan is reviewed regularly with outcomes evaluated against intended actions. However, there is insufficient breakdown of this plan, term-by-term, in specific detail about how the precise engagement of outside agencies and other local schools will be undertaken, and the nature and extent of their support.

There is now a clearer understanding of how pupil progress will be measured. The headteacher has provided clear guidelines concerning expectations of pupil progress. Regular pupil-progress meetings are taking place between the headteacher, senior staff and class teachers to monitor the progress of individual pupils and classes. It is too early to judge the impact of the pupil-progress tracking system as so many new staff have been appointed and the system has not yet had chance to become embedded in practice. However, the headteacher and senior staff now have a much clearer overview of the progress that pupils are making.

Members of the governing body are becoming more aware of the difficulties which the school is facing through regular and frank discussions with the headteacher and local authority. However, bespoke training to ensure that all members are better equipped to fulfil their responsibilities and appropriately hold the school to account has not yet been arranged. Members of the governing body still do not play a sufficiently active part in monitoring the progress the school is making through their own programme of evaluation activities.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership, management and governance - satisfactory

### **External support**

The quality of external support has varied from good to inadequate. The secondment of a committed and able acting deputy headteacher by the local authority from another school has contributed significantly to the improvements the school has made. The vast majority of other support has been provided by the local authority in the form of learning and teacher advisers working in school to improve the quality of provision. This has had some impact on improving the use of resources in mathematics. Local authority support for the temporary special educational needs coordinator has also been of a high quality. As a result of discussion between the headteacher and the local authority, the support of some local authority staff was withdrawn due to its ineffectiveness. A number of teaching staff have also worked with other successful primary schools to observe good practice and challenge current methodology, for example, writing at Key Stage 2. Another positive link has been made with a Local Leader of Education to support leadership developments.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that a short-term improvement plan is written in collaboration with the local authority and tightly focused on one term's immediate actions, with measurable success criteria to improve pupil outcomes.



- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that at least 60% of lessons are consistently good or better by ensuring teachers develop the skills to be able to measure pupils' learning gains in lessons and amend their plans accordingly to challenge all pupils.
- Improve the leadership skills of the mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator so that they can effectively support, monitor and evaluate provision and raise the attainment of all pupils.