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10 November 2011

Mr M Mitchell
Headteacher
Langley Primary School
St Bernard's Road
Olton
Solihull
B92 7DJ

Dear Mr Mitchell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Langley Primary School

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy-Taylor, additional inspector, to your school on 8–9 November 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 11 May 2011. 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 – satisfactory.

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 Solihull.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- With immediate effect, take steps to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures by:
 - setting up systems and procedures with clear lines of accountability to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils
 - carrying out thorough and regular risk assessments
 - establishing clear management responsibilities and record-keeping in relation to all aspects of safeguarding
 - establishing systems to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding measures.

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics and eradicate inadequate teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers have the skills and knowledge to accurately assess pupils' learning
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons which meet and challenge the individual learning needs and interest of all pupils
 - ensuring that marking supports pupils to make progress and is appropriate and relevant to the objectives of the intended learning
 - providing an appropriate curriculum, with opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across a range of subjects
 - providing pupils with the opportunity to develop their skills to ensure progression in their learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing systems and procedures to assess the actions taken to improve the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and outcomes
 - involving all stakeholders in more effective action planning
 - empowering key senior and middle leaders to take responsibility for improving outcomes for all pupils.

- Increase the effectiveness of the governing body by:

- ensuring that it meets its statutory responsibilities with regard to safeguarding
- improving procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's actions in order to secure improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Langley Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8–9 November 2011.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, a middle management group, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority.

Context

Since the May 2011 inspection, two temporary staff have left and two assistant headteachers have increased their teaching commitment. The local authority is providing considerable support, including consultants and funding of the secondment of two deputy headteachers from local primary schools who have been supporting the school for two days a week since September 2011. The local authority has also appointed an additional governor.

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

In Years 1 to 6, the proportion of pupils making satisfactory rates of progress is edging upwards, but there is still some way to go to eliminate all underachievement. The 2011 national test results for Year 6 pupils were average in mathematics but significantly below in English, including at the higher Level 5. In this subject, the gap in attainment between boys and girls was wider than that seen nationally. The attainment of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities was also below that of similar pupils nationally. From their below average starting points, pupils' progress was satisfactory in English and good in mathematics. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was broadly satisfactory. The achievement of the few pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was not as strong as that of their peers.

There remain inconsistencies in the rate of progress pupils make across classes and subjects. There are signs of improvement in classes where teaching is strongest and sharply focused. The most significant area of underachievement is in pupils' reading and writing, particularly in Years 3 and 4. School analysis of national test results and the tracking of current pupils' progress are increasingly reliable and accurate. This is helping to identify gaps in learning, including for groups of pupils such as those identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Intervention strategies are being used but their impact is not fully demonstrated in pupils' speedier progress.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. They particularly enjoy opportunities to talk to each other, either in pairs and small groups, to share their

ideas and discuss their learning. In lessons where pupils have a secure understanding of their targets and are encouraged to use them in their work, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. This practice is not consistent across the school to help accelerate pupils' progress. Great effort has gone into ensuring that pupils present their work neatly and take pride in their work and this is making a good impact. Pupils are also aware of the need to continue to improve their handwriting. However, too many pupils across the school make common spelling and punctuation errors, particularly when writing independently. Pupils' mental calculation skills in mathematics are promoted well. Pupils are provided with sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical learning to real-life situations. Year 6 pupils are currently making satisfactory progress towards meeting their attainment targets for the end of Key Stage 2, although the progress is stronger in mathematics than in English.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. The majority have good attitudes to learning, and occasional off-task behaviour is addressed promptly. The number of exclusions in 2010-2011 was low. The rate of attendance has been average, and strategies reported in the last inspection to further reduce absences continue to be implemented. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there are lots of adults around them to support and help. Older pupils enjoy reading with younger ones as part of their mentoring role.

The effectiveness of provision

The level of support provided by external advisers and leaders is helping to raise teachers' awareness of what constitutes effective teaching and learning. However, senior leaders acknowledge that there remain variations in the expectations set by staff so that, over time, pupils are not always making enough or faster progress, particularly in writing. A start has been made in identifying opportunities in the curriculum to develop pupils' writing skills and to enable them to apply their learning from literacy lessons to different subjects. In the good teaching observed during this inspection, teachers' high expectations and effective questioning promoted good progress. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils had to explain their thinking using the interactive whiteboard and the teacher's questioning built further on pupils' responses. Similarly, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils' learning developed at a good pace and pupils used their independent learning skills effectively.

In Years 1 to 6, teachers undertake more regular reviews of pupils' work in books. Teachers are improving their knowledge of attainment levels to more accurately assess how well pupils are doing. Using this knowledge, teachers are setting learning targets and linking the progress pupils make towards meeting these targets in teachers' marking. However, this practice is in its infancy and is not consistent across the school. Where target setting is effective, pupils know their current levels of performance and what they need to do to improve. There is an increasing use of peer- and self-assessment. Teachers' marking implements agreed procedures, highlighting what pupils have done well and providing helpful guidance on the next steps. There is an expectation that pupils will respond to the guidance because it is checked routinely by teachers so that there is a purposeful dialogue. Senior leaders recognise that the variability in the quality of teaching, inconsistent use of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the needs of all different abilities, and the variable quality of marking, are restricting the rate of pupils' progress. Swift action has been taken to deal with inadequate teaching and there are raised expectations about improving teaching quality from satisfactory to good or better. Some staff have had the opportunity to visit other schools to observe effective teaching and have appreciated it.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- eradicate inadequate teaching – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher is enthusiastic and determined and his vision for improvement is shared across the school. Monitoring is now more systematic and includes routine lesson visits and more regular meetings with teachers to check pupils' progress. The actions taken so far are appropriate, as are the changes to the roles and responsibilities of teachers, leaders and members of the governing body.

The school, supported by the local authority, took prompt action to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection in relation to safeguarding. There are better systems and procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils. The governing body has set up a scrutiny committee to ensure that policies and effective implementation are routinely checked, including those related to safeguarding and risk assessments. Governors are receiving training and are developing their understanding about their roles in providing support and challenge. Link governors have been identified so that they are better placed to gain first-hand evidence to help them provide strategic direction. A recently formed parents' and carers' forum is chaired by a parent governor. This reflects the school's commitment to engage parents and carers more in the process of improvement.

The school improvement plan has specific priorities and actions that set out timelines and criteria so that senior staff and the governing body can measure how well the

teaching is improving. The plan complements the local authority's action plan for improvement and sets out broader responsibilities and accountability to senior and middle leaders. Although the school improvement plan lacks quantitative criteria to measure the impact of teaching on raising attainment, subject leaders' plans make effective links between provision and pupils' outcomes. A good start has been made to develop middle leaders' monitoring and evaluation roles for their areas of responsibility. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and progress, and are enthusiastic to bring about improvement. They value the support provided by the seconded deputy headteachers to help develop the procedures for checking the impact teaching has on learning. The capacity for sustaining improvement is currently reliant on external support.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- take steps to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory
- increase the effectiveness of the governing body – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has set out a clear programme for improvement. The target date for the removal of special measures is ambitious. Local authority advisers and seconded deputy headteachers have been appointed to support the school leaders to improve teaching. This is benefiting the school, but it is recognised that much remains to be done to secure the targets identified in the statement of action for improving the quality of teaching. The local authority's joint evaluations of lessons carried out with the headteacher and the seconded deputy headteachers provide a clear analysis of teaching quality and helpfully identify areas for further improvement. There are systematic arrangements for the headteacher to report on the progress made for each of the issues raised in the school's last inspection. This is helping to identify the positive impact of support as well as to clarify how further support best meets the needs of the school to raise standards.