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10 November 2011

Mr D Edwards
Headteacher
Downsview Community Primary School
Beech Avenue
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Kent
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Dear Mr Edwards

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Downsview Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2010. 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 Kent Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Additional inspector

Annex

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

- The governing body must, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to:
 - the safeguarding of pupils
 - the promotion of equality of opportunity
 - the provision of sex education.

- Develop a culture of respect and a safe environment by:
 - ensuring the school promotes and celebrates diversity
 - consistently and robustly challenging behaviour or language which may cause anyone to feel unsafe.

- Raise standards and increase the rate of progress made by pupils, particularly in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and 2, by:
 - setting challenging targets, tracking progress and securing appropriate interventions to support those who are at risk of falling behind
 - ensuring that both teachers and pupils are sharply focused on the next steps for each individual pupil's learning throughout lessons and that teachers give clear feedback to pupils based on these
 - ensuring that the curriculum as a whole and individual lessons are relevant, interesting, linked to the real world and strongly support pupils in developing their basic skills.

- Develop leadership at all levels by:
 - establishing a shared understanding of the school's vision and the task ahead
 - instituting effective systems for self-evaluation, forward planning and monitoring of progress
 - introducing robust procedures for holding all staff to account and celebrating success.

Special measures: monitoring of Downsview Community Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 8–9 November 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons, observed playtimes and lunchtimes, scrutinised documents and met with subject coordinators, the Chair of the Governing Body, the member of the governing body responsible for safeguarding, groups of pupils, and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit, a new member of staff has been appointed to teach the Reception class, and three support staff have left the school. The acting deputy headteacher was appointed full time to the role from September.

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

Pupils' rates of progress continue to improve, albeit slowly, and there are still variations in the numbers of pupils making the expected rates of progress. The better progress seen in Year 2 at the last visit was reflected in the national assessments, where pupils' attainment was broadly average. Teacher assessment indicates that current progress may have slowed, as not enough pupils are confident enough in their basic writing, reading and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' rates of progress are still too variable, although particular year groups, such as Year 3, are on track to reach expected levels, as teaching is consistently good. For example, they really enjoyed the challenge of writing about myths and legends and were enthusiastic to write their accounts of the Greek legends. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage often make good progress, particularly in learning basic letter sounds and in developing their speaking and social skills. The outside area provides a basic range of activities to aid learning, but is not as enticing or stimulating as the indoor environment.

In Years 4 to 6, not enough pupils, including those few from minority ethnic groups, are on track to make the expected levels of progress, particularly in writing. Results in the last national tests for Year 6 pupils were low in both English and mathematics. There are examples where pupils write accurately or creatively; for example in a Year 5/6 activity, pupils explored an imaginary computer-generated world to stimulate their writing. However, such examples are not the norm so some pupils do not write confidently or at length. Others do not take enough care when completing their written work. Closer monitoring of pupils' progress helps to pinpoint those pupils who need extra help in their learning and pupils, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are supported effectively. More

challenging targets set by the school and individual class teachers are raising expectations of what pupils' should achieve. However, this has not yet fully impacted in consistently improving the quality of their work. Teachers' assessments give pupils more 'next steps' guidance about how to improve their work, but on occasions this guidance is not brief or sharp enough so pupils clearly know what to focus upon next. In mathematics, although some activities have greater regard to help pupils apply their skills to 'real-world' situations, there are still missed opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to investigative or problem-solving activities based on relevant and interesting starting points.

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

- Raise standards and increase the rate of progress made by pupils, particularly in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and 2 – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve, as confirmed by pupils themselves. They say there is a greater sense of respect in school. As a result, they feel more settled and secure. The good arrangements for safeguarding and site security noted at the last inspection aid their sense of security. Pupils readily play together at playtimes and the zoning of the playground areas is something they appreciate. Pupils say they look forward to setting up the new buddy system to enhance the way they can care for more children. Dinner arrangements proceed smoothly, although some pupils say the noise levels occasionally get too high and have suggested ways these might be reduced. Information from parents and carers gained through questionnaires confirms their appreciation of the school's efforts to improve the care and well-being of their children.

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

- Develop a culture of respect and a safe environment – good.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching has improved from the last visit and recent staff appointments have helped strengthen the overall quality of teaching. The aims of lessons are usually clear and pupils show a greater sense of engagement as activities are often practically based and move at a brisk pace. Activities are sometimes overly led or directed by the teacher; for example, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to shape their own learning or to suggest alternative ways of approaching problems. In another mathematical activity involving fraction problems, some resources for pupils to use or complete were uninspiring and worksheet based. Assessment routines are improving so they are a more established part of day-to-day activities. Staff check on how well pupils learn during the lesson and pupils have frequent opportunities to

self-assess. The use of targets in English aids pupils' progress, although this is not mirrored in their mathematical work, where targets are not established. Although pupils appreciate their targets, the way these are used or recorded varies between classes so that the approach is inconsistent. The efforts to improve the relevance of activities through a more creative curriculum have been partially successful. Pupils report that lessons are now more fun than they have previously been. Initiatives such as 'living history' visits have helped enliven topic-based work. Studies about others' backgrounds and beliefs develop a greater sense of tolerance and understanding of other pupils and their differing cultures.

Care, guidance and support of pupils continue to improve as the school takes further steps to ensure their safety and well-being. This is often aided by increasing opportunities for pupils to give their views through the school council, questionnaires and by being interviewed by staff for pointers to improve.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher continues to provide stable and effective day-to-day leadership, which has been strengthened by the appointment of a full-time deputy headteacher. Careful evaluation of previous progress ensures that current initiatives build on previous work, particularly in developing assessment routines and in building up relationships and links with parents and carers. Coordination of subjects, an area of focus, is gaining momentum, but skills in lesson observations for some staff are not developed securely enough to help pinpoint where key improvements are needed.

The governing body continue to ensure all aspects of safeguarding are secure and staff have completed further training on child protection since the last inspection. Pupils report that they feel looked after, secure and challenged in their work, which is backed up by comments from parents and carers, such as, 'I am really pleased with the way my child has settled this year.' The school has sustained its progress on this aspect. In addition, a clear focus on improving attendance, particularly for those who are persistently absent, has resulted in higher attendance levels compared to last year. The governing body have just advertised for a full-time headteacher in order to secure the long-term stability, vision and capacity of the school to improve further. Staff are positive about the recent changes, particularly the way they are encouraged to develop their skills and talents, including the collaboration with their partner school and with the guidance of senior leaders. Performance management routines are now well established. Some judgements on pupils' progress may be overly cautious as staff are rightly setting high aspirations and targets for pupils. The school's development planning is thorough and highlights the correct priorities for action, although the absence of time scales makes it difficult to set deadlines for completion of tasks.

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

- The governing body must, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, the promotion of equality of opportunity and the provision of sex education – satisfactory.

- Develop leadership at all level – good.

External support

The local authority continue to support the school effectively through its challenge initiative, where aspects such as improving the quality of teaching to increase rates of pupils' progress and enjoyment of learning have a positive effect. The support of a challenge advisor provides a good balance of rigour and support. The school's links with its partner school continue to be beneficial and increasingly the support is becoming two way as staff exchange good ideas and share effective practice. The special educational needs coordinator continues to provide on-going part-time support and the plans to withdraw this support as the school's capacity to improve increases are rightly in hand.