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16 December 2011

Mrs J Connor
Headteacher
Leigh Primary School
Walker Lane
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Cheshire
SK14 5PL

Dear Mrs Connor

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Leigh Primary School

Following my visit with Jim Bennetts, additional inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 December 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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 – 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 Tameside.

Yours sincerely

Angela Headon
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on May 2010

- Raise attainment in mathematics to bring it in line with national expectations, by ensuring that methods of teaching numeracy are applied consistently and effectively by all staff.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, by:
 - rigorous and effective monitoring of the quality of teaching
 - developing the effective use of ongoing informal assessment in lessons
 - ensuring consistency in the quality of marking and in the use of learning targets for individuals, so that pupils always have a clear picture of what they need to do to improve their work and of what the next steps in their learning should be.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on raising attainment and ensure that the school meets all of its statutory responsibilities by:
 - developing and implementing a strategic long-term plan for the school's improvement, tailored to meet the needs of the school and its pupils
 - ensuring that provision to safeguard pupils meets all statutory requirements
 - ensuring that the governing body provides challenge as well as support and that it holds the school fully to account for pupils' attainment and progress and for the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding provision.
- Improve attendance, by developing and implementing a programme of concerted and effective actions to promote good attendance.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Leigh Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 December 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, examined pupils' workbooks and observed 14 lessons and an assembly. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior and subject leaders, teaching and support staff, pupils, the Chair and a member of the Governing Body and a senior representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2011, all classes have been taught by permanent teachers, with the exception of one class in Key Stage 1 and one in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A deputy headteacher has also been absent during the autumn term. The school has introduced a new electronic signing-in system and extensive new playground equipment has been installed.

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

The school's 2011 national test results for Year 6 pupils showed a higher proportion of pupils attaining both expected and higher levels in mathematics than in 2008 and 2009. No national tests were taken in 2010. This trend of improvement at both expected and higher levels was also reflected in the mathematics results at the end of Key Stage 1. In considering the overall value added measure, significant progress in mathematics for Year 6 pupils is also evident and the proportion making the required progress between Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly similar to the national figure. In English, attainment in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 improved. However, despite extensive intervention to overcome the legacy of underachievement from previous years, attainment for Year 6 pupils overall remained low.

Current progress, however, in both English and mathematics and across all year groups is continuing to improve. All year groups are making at least expected progress, with accelerated improvement in Years 2 and 5 in mathematics, Years 2 and 3 in reading and Years 2 and 4 in writing. Progress and attainment data indicate that pupils in both key stages are presently on course to reach the school's challenging targets in English and mathematics, with attainment moving closer towards the national average.

Since the previous inspection, comprehensive action has been taken to identify and monitor the progress and attainment of key groups of pupils in the school. These groups include pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils who speak English as an additional language and gender groups. Through more frequent reviews and scrutiny of assessment information and well focused 'pupil progress' meetings, teachers now have a sharper understanding of how to secure



better achievement, considering both pupils' ability and the relative performance of key groups.

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

- raise attainment in mathematics – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school has maintained the momentum evident at the previous monitoring inspection and the overall attendance figure is now similar to the national average; although attendance in the autumn term was well above this figure. Well targeted strategies, ranging from pupil rewards to legal sanctions for those families whose children do not attend regularly, have also resulted in a significant decline in the number of pupils with a record of persistent absence. This figure now represents approximately 1% of the school's population. School leaders and all staff ensure that the importance of attendance is continually communicated to pupils and their families. The significant work of the learning mentor has been central to this improvement.

Pupils' very positive behaviour in lessons and around the school and their improved attendance reflects their enjoyment of school life. They play an increasingly active part in the school's work as monitors, play leaders and school councillors, as demonstrated by their involvement in decisions taken on the new playground equipment. They feel safe and appreciate the measures taken by the school to improve entrance and exit procedures. Pupils report that they particularly enjoy the new integrated curriculum.

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

- improve attendance – good

The effectiveness of provision

Overall, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress within lessons has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. School leaders have worked successfully to develop the use of assessment in lessons by strengthening the link between learning objectives, differentiated activities and questioning, marking and curriculum targets to improve pupils' learning and their rate of progress. Pupils talk confidently about their work and the marking of pupils' workbooks consistently shows pupils their targets on the 'learning ladders', what they have achieved and how they can do better. As a result, in the majority of lessons observed by inspectors, pupils made good progress and were successful in continuing to catch up from previous levels of underachievement.

However, although consistency overall between different subjects and key stages is evident, and is reflected in pupils' workbooks and the school's assessment data, the individual

practice of some teachers remains variable. Consequently, some pupils receive a mixed experience and are, therefore, not always able to sustain their good progress from one lesson to the next. The vast majority of teachers however, through regular formal observations and detailed feedback from senior leaders, know how to tackle any shortcomings and improve, as demonstrated during the inspection.

Nevertheless, senior leaders are fully aware of the need to ensure that the key aspects of good teaching, already fostered through earlier professional development are maintained, while continuing to develop higher-order teaching skills, to ensure pupils make at least good progress in every lesson.

The new integrated curriculum is already successfully promoting pupils' enjoyment and engagement in their learning. Although at an early stage in some subject areas, leaders responsible for subjects other than English and mathematics are continuing to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating, including reviewing subject content, improving teachers' skills and understanding, and monitoring planning and workbooks.

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

- improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has continued to drive forward, at pace, all aspects of school improvement. Leaders and staff are continuing to embrace change with a concerted commitment to rapidly improve pupils' achievement, as reflected in their challenging performance management targets. Consistent and accelerated progress in core subjects, a significant increase in attendance and the better use of assessment in lessons to improve provision overall are now evident.

Phase leaders are also continuing to develop their strategic role. In this, the regular monitoring of lessons, teachers' planning and pupils' work continues to play a key part in raising achievement and improving consistency in provision. Unannounced formal lesson observations and the more regular collection of assessment information and meetings on pupils' progress have further strengthened senior leaders' ability to swiftly identify teachers who may require further professional development and pupils who are underachieving. This work is further supported by the work of foundation subject leaders who are also starting to actively develop their involvement in quality assurance procedures.

A recent absence in the senior leadership team demonstrated the increasing capacity of leadership to continue to maintain and further improve the school's work on the inspection and wider school priorities. This has also resulted appropriately in a further review of leadership roles, including for both science and Key Stage 2, and the school's work in key areas, including inclusion. All leaders are wholly involved in the planning, review, and

evaluation of their actions in their areas of responsibility. This work is reflected in whole-school improvement planning and the ongoing reports to the governing body.

The governing body has continued to closely monitor the school's work. Their involvement as link governors has included regular visits to review progress in key areas, including performance in English and mathematics, inclusion and links with parents and carers. This, together with ongoing training, including that on pupils' performance data and the curriculum, and a recent skills audit is helping to further develop the quality and strategic capacity of governance. Further safeguarding measures have been introduced, including a requirement for visitors to sign in and out electronically and the completion of risk assessments for the new playground equipment.

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

- improve the impact of leadership and management on raising attainment and ensure that the school meets all of its statutory responsibilities – good

External support

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the local authority's capacity to support the school has been more limited. However the senior school improvement officer has an accurate view of the school's needs and has focused the local authority's support effectively in line with the school's increasing leadership capacity. Ongoing support for music and science, alongside continuing advice, support and challenge on the school's priority areas are notable features. The school is also working effectively with external consultants and a number of partner schools on aspects including assessment, science, literacy, inclusion and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen further the consistency of teaching to ensure a higher proportion of good or better lessons.