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8 March 2012
Mr Mitchell
Headteacher
Langley Primary School
St Bernard's Road
Olton
Solihull
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Dear Mr Mitchell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Langley Primary School

Following my visit with Judith Goodchild, additional inspector, to your school on 6–7 March 2012, 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 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed at present.

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 second monitoring inspection on 6–7 March 2012

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection three members of staff have left, including one who was on a temporary contract. One of the two deputy headteachers seconded to the school for two days a week finished at the end of the autumn term 2011. It is anticipated that the other seconded deputy headteacher will finish at the end of the spring term 2012, when a permanent deputy headteacher will take up the post.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Although pupils' achievement is improving it remains variable. Pupils in Year 6 are making at least the expected progress in English and mathematics, reflecting good teaching. Pupils' progress demonstrates some effective catching up on historic, significant underachievement, particularly in English. In the mathematics lessons seen in Year 6, teachers showed a good knowledge of pupils' current attainment and provided challenge to extend their learning. In other year groups where pupils made good progress, assessment information was used effectively to challenge pupils and this enabled them to aspire to higher levels of attainment, particularly the more-able pupils. Effective deployment of teaching and support assistants enabled pupils who have special educational needs to make progress broadly in line with their peers.

In lessons where achievement is variable and not yet good enough, tasks are not matched closely enough to the pupils' different abilities, including for those who have learning difficulties. Insufficient account is taken of pupils' prior learning. Time is not always used effectively to enable pupils to make faster progress. There continues to be a sharp focus on improving pupils' writing, including in subjects other than English. This is beginning to make an impact on the quality of writing but pupils' progress is still satisfactory at best in this aspect of English. The school's current tracking data indicate that pupils' progress in mathematics is better than in English. Attainment targets set for the current Year 6 pupils are suitably challenging.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The school has made appropriate use of tailored support from local authority consultants to help improve the quality of teaching. Evidence from this monitoring inspection shows a higher proportion of good teaching than in November 2011. The monitoring of teaching by senior leaders and external consultants indicates that there is no endemic inadequate teaching. Teachers are more conversant with assessment data, and are using it more effectively in lessons to improve pupils' progress. Where teaching was good, pupils were encouraged to be creative in their writing and given good stimulus to do so, including through exemplars of pupils' own work as well as teachers' modelling of effective writing. Good questioning techniques encouraged all pupils to think deeper and enabled them to contribute to discussions. Good use of tasks that were matched well to pupils' abilities and effective use of teaching assistants ensured that pupils make good progress. Self- and peer-assessment were established well and promoted good learning. There are examples of very detailed marking to which pupils respond enthusiastically, often correcting mistakes or improving their work in the light of teachers' comments and questions. Pupils have a clear view about how to improve their work and a greater proportion of pupils now know their learning targets and the National Curriculum levels to which they aspire.

Good or better quality teaching is not yet sufficiently embedded in all classes to ensure that pupils make accelerated progress. When tasks are not sufficiently challenging, pupils become inattentive and restless and the pace of learning slows because work is too easy or too demanding. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and pupils do not have enough time to apply their knowledge and skills. Teachers sometimes provide tasks that are practical and enjoyable without setting more extension work if pupils complete what has been set. This slows pupils' learning, and especially for those who have the potential to reach or exceed age-related levels in English and mathematics.

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

- eradicate inadequate teaching – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

This was not an area of weakness at the previous inspection. Strengths noted then have been sustained. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good when teaching is engaging. Pupils' behaviour in the assembly observed was good. The majority have positive attitudes to learning. Adults manage pupils' behaviour skilfully and consistently in the classroom and beyond, recognising and praising positive conduct. Relationships are respectful between pupils and with adults. Pupils say that they feel safe and there is support for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Pupils are punctual and the attendance rate is above average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders and the governing body have established better systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. The evaluation of progress against the key issues identified by the May 2011 inspection is honest and realistic. Significant improvements have been made to ensure site security through new fencing, locks, and signing-in procedures. Risk assessments are carried out routinely and any issues identified are addressed swiftly. The results of a recent questionnaire for some parents and carers, seeking their views about school safety, were very positive and pupils say that they feel safe in school. There are clearer lines of accountability, and staff and governors are familiar with named people in aspects of safeguarding. The governing body members are proactive in gaining first-hand knowledge about the quality of education through their visits and discussions with staff and parents and carers. This helps to supplement work done at individual committee levels and enables the full governing body meetings to be more sharply focused on the quality of teaching and learning. The governors have raised their aspirations for the school and have an increasingly good understanding of what needs to be done further to secure a consistent improvement in pupils' outcomes.

The headteacher is determined and enthusiastic and there is a shared sense of common purpose across the school. All staff have embraced teaching and progress targets as part of performance management. Together with the assistant headteacher, senior leaders are using the system that tracks pupils' progress to review improvements to pupils' achievement. This is done on a termly basis through meetings with teachers to check the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils. Currently there is a risk of not identifying underachievement soon enough because of termly rather than half-termly reviews. This also means that the potential to use insights gained from data analysis by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching is not fully realised. The involvement of subject leaders in monitoring lessons and reviewing pupils' progress with teachers, especially in English and mathematics, is at an early stage of development. There is an increasing understanding of the performance of individual pupils against levels and sub-levels, and of groups such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and different ethnic groups. The use of this information by leaders, including subject leaders, to monitor how well gaps in performance are narrowing is underdeveloped.

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

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

External support

The local authority has continued to provide the support set out in its programme for improvement. Teachers and subject leaders have appreciated the coaching provided and say that it is improving their practice. A recent review conducted by local authority advisers has provided a helpful picture of improvements secured so far. The seconded deputy headteachers have mentored subject leaders in their role, thereby enabling these leaders to be more confident and clearer in understanding how to fulfil their roles. They have also helped to establish pupil progress reviews so that senior leaders to have a more accurate view of pupils' progress. The modelling they have provided for governors is enabling them to ask sharper questions about provision and pupils' outcomes.