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9 March 2012

Mrs A Bufton-McCoy
Headteacher
Belvoirdale Community Primary School
Scotlands Road
Coalville
LE67 3RD

Dear Mrs Bufton-McCoy

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Belvoirdale Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7–8 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 15 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 – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed at this time.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Sheelagh Barnes
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in English and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2, and ensure that pupils' achievement is commensurate with their capabilities.

- As a matter of some urgency, improve the quality of teaching and learning further, so that the large majority is good or better and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement by:
 - using data and other pupil information more effectively to plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils, particularly for higher attainers and those who find learning difficult
 - ensuring teachers provide both oral and written comments to pupils that will help them to improve their work further
 - helping teachers to use questioning techniques more effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and lead to accelerated pupil progress
 - using time more effectively in lessons to ensure a brisk pace of learning.

- Ensure that school leaders and managers at all levels in Key Stage 1 and 2 improve the school's performance by:
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives to improve pupils' attainment, achievement and progress
 - taking swift and effective actions to address weaknesses.

Special measures: monitoring of Belvoirdale Community Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 7–8 March 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons, talked to pupils, heard pupils read and scrutinised pupils' workbooks. A range of documents were evaluated, including evidence of monitoring, development plans and local authority records of visit reports. The inspector met with senior and middle leaders as well as the Chair of the Interim Executive Board.

Context

Since the previous visit a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken up their posts. One teacher has left.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Indications from work in books indicate that there was some relaxing of impetus during December. However, since January, there has been a renewed vigour in tackling issues. Outcomes in the two Reception classes continue to be positive. Interventions, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs continue to have a measurable and positive impact on the progress these pupils make.

In Key Stage 1, there have been notable improvements, especially in pupils' skills in learning to read. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics has shown improvement, but these aspects are still not good enough. Despite a generally improving picture, school data confirms there are still variations in progress between some classes and subjects. For example, in one Year 1 class, progress was least in mathematics, while in another it was in reading. In a Year 2 class, progress was best in mathematics and writing and, in another, the strongest progress was in reading.

In Key Stage 2, the picture has improved significantly, although there remains a backlog of underachievement, particularly for pupils in Year 3. However, there has been an increasing acceleration of the progress made by pupils from all groups, so that the rate of their improvement has doubled since the summer term. Progress is strongest in Years 5 and 6. Current progress in writing in Year 5 and Year 6 is good. This is as a result of a whole-school focus on developing pupils' writing skills.

Throughout the school, pupils' knowledge of the relationships between letters and the sounds they make has developed well. This is having a positive effect on their confidence when trying to read unknown words for the first time.

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

- raise standards and achievement, particularly in English and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2, and ensure that pupils' achievement is commensurate with their capabilities – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

There has been an overall improvement in the quality of the teaching; a far higher proportion of good teaching was observed during this visit, meeting the school's target of 60% good teaching by this time. A significant change is in teachers' use of data in all classes. The newly appointed headteacher has introduced the practice of each class teacher having a file containing carefully annotated information on the progress and attainment of all pupils. This information is linked to the clear targets for improvement for each pupil in English and mathematics. Pupils know these targets and also the learning objective of each lesson. The targets are derived from the National Curriculum. However, this is not made explicit to pupils in all cases. As a result, older pupils cannot readily identify what they need to master and demonstrate to cross a grade boundary in their work. In addition, while lessons are planned to provide tasks that are relatively easy, moderately challenging and very challenging, these levels do not always link to National Curriculum levels as precisely as they might. Sometimes, the requirement is for potentially higher attaining pupils to do more rather than harder work.

The implementation of the revised marking policy has resulted in a distinct improvement in marking in English and mathematics workbooks. However, marking of literacy and numeracy in other subjects is still a relative weakness. As a result, opportunities to maximise pupils' learning of skills in writing and mathematics are missed.

Teachers' skills in questioning pupils to enable them to make gains in their learning are developing steadily. In one lesson observed, the teacher made good use of an innovative method to check pupils' understanding using multiple choice questions and small flash cards. As a result, she was quickly able to identify where there was any misunderstanding of the work covered so far and provide further help. This had a speedy and positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning.

In many lessons observed, the pace was brisk and the teaching lively. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils spent too long on the carpet listening to the teacher. This resulted in pupils listening unnecessarily to instructions and explanations which were not well matched to their particular learning needs, but were mainly too advanced.

At these times, the pace of these pupils' learning slowed, although they remained quiet and well behaved.

The teaching of phonics, the relationship between the written form of letters and the sounds they make, has been reviewed and improved. There is now a consistent, whole-school approach, using one scheme. This is already reaping benefits in pupils' abilities to sound out unknown, phonetically regular words and has had an impact on improving the rate at which they learn to read.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning further, so that the large majority is good or better and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy school and attendance is average. However, punctuality has significantly improved in recent months, mainly as a result of the focus given to this by the new headteacher. Each day, parents and pupils are greeted at the gate. There has been a similar focus on involving parents more directly in their children's education, which has greatly improved the return rate of homework tasks.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy, which they put into practice. Pupils' behaviour continues to be good. The management of pupils' behaviour is consistent and understood by all. Pupils make a positive contribution to both the school and local community through responsibilities and duties, such as helping at lunch time. They are enthusiastic in explaining what they are learning at the moment and proud of their achievements. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved still further and is now good. This is regularly demonstrated around the school and in class by pupils' calm and cheerful manner, and their consideration and respect for others.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The arrival of the new headteacher and the new deputy headteacher has already resulted in a number of positive changes in the school. Improvement planning targets the most important aspects and focuses clearly on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation is accurate and honest. It follows the headteacher's tenet that, 'You cannot get where you want to be, unless you know exactly where you are now.' Managers at all levels have faith in the headteacher's judgments and are all committed to moving the school forward.

There is now far greater consistency in assessment and its use. Teachers' classroom files contain clear and accurate information of the progress and attainment of each pupil in reading, writing and mathematics. This, in turn, has led to greater accountability at a classroom level. Close monitoring by senior managers ensures that any slippage is quickly addressed and equality of opportunity is promoted.

The monitoring of standards of teaching and learning are regular and rigorous. The headteacher is very pro-active in her monitoring, both in the classroom and also by examining pupils' workbooks. As a result, she has swiftly gained a good understanding of the profile of teaching and learning throughout the school. The outcomes from monitoring have led to individual training in particular aspects for any member of staff who needs support. The curriculum is being given greater width and balance, and topics are chosen to interest and excite pupils.

Stronger links have been developed with parents and carers. The daily greeting at the school gate has already had a significant impact on punctuality and attitudes to school. Newsletters are sent out weekly and internet messaging used to pass on news. Parents of older pupils have all been invited in to discuss their children's progress and the likely outcomes of end of key stage assessments. There has been a measurable increase in the number of pupils completing homework tasks as a result of this initiative.

The interim executive board continues to monitor and challenge the school. They are now preparing to develop a shadow governing body to allow time for members to become suitably trained and confident to challenge. Coordinators for English, mathematics and the teacher with responsibility to monitor support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs continue to develop their roles in guiding and challenging colleagues.

While many of these new initiatives are at the early stages of showing impact, the whole school belief in the leadership of the headteacher is very apparent. Many aspects which have been addressed are already indicating an upward trend.

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

- ensure that school leaders and managers at all levels in Key Stage 1 and 2 improve the school's performance – good.

External support

The local authority is providing a good level of support for the school. The support currently is focussed on providing training to build teachers' skills. This, in turn, is improving the school's capacity to drive improvement from within the school.