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18 May 2012

Mrs Sharon Bruton
Executive Headteacher
Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School
Atherton Road
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Wigan
Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Bruton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School

Following my visit with Jacqueline Rothery, Ofsted secondee, to your school on 16 and 17 May 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 June 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.

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, the Corporate Director People for Wigan and the Diocese of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Secure and improve the longer-term leadership, governance and staffing of the school.
- Improve all pupils' achievement and raise their attainment across the full range of subjects by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups
 - raising the quality of all teaching and assessment to good or better
 - improving the teaching of early reading and writing, including the teaching of letter sounds, so that all children make better progress
 - ensuring that pupils study a full range of subjects.
- Ensure that the Reception class is taught by a qualified teacher.
- Ensure that during the transition to federated school status, pupils remain well supported and parents and carers are kept fully-informed of developments.

Special measures: monitoring of Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 May 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including parts of 13 lessons; scrutinised documents; talked informally to parents and carers; and met with the executive and associate headteachers, staff, groups of pupils, the governing body's monitoring committee and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the Reception class teachers have left the school. An assistant headteacher has been appointed to lead Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage; he is teaching the mixed-age Years 1/Reception class. Classes in Key Stage 2 have been reorganised so that pupils are now taught in single-age groups.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's regular tracking of pupils' achievement shows that at the end of the spring term pupils' attainment in reading was above age-related expectations in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. It was below the levels expected in Key Stage 1. Attainment in writing was in line with expectations in the Early Years Foundation Stage but below these in Key Stage 1. The picture was uneven at Key Stage 2 with performance ranging from below to above the expected levels. In almost all year groups, attainment in mathematics was above age-related expectations. Overall, the school's data show that in the spring term pupils' progress accelerated.

The initial work to identify those pupils in need of additional help with their learning has been built on effectively. A range of interventions and support has been put in place; the school's evaluations show that these have had a positive impact. A significant proportion of Key Stage 2 pupils, whose additional needs can be met from within the school, have caught up with their peer group.

Pupils' good behaviour and diligent approach contribute positively to their learning. They are attentive in lessons, engage quickly with activities and work well both independently and in groups. They share ideas effectively with one another, including as talk partners. Good collaborative work is a feature of the creative curriculum. For instance, Year 3 pupils made good progress in developing empathy for, and understanding of, life in the favelas of Brazil through interviewing one another. In discussions, pupils talked with enthusiasm about reading. Many read at home and are confident to read aloud. As the consequence of a

recent initiative, pupils are gaining a better understanding of the layers of meaning in books. Pupils show pride in their written work through good presentation and handwriting.

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

- improve all pupils' achievement and raise their attainment across the full range of subjects – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

There have been improvements in the overall quality of teaching. In the better lessons observed, teachers' enthusiasm was infectious. Their good subject knowledge and thorough planning helped to ensure that pupils were well motivated by exciting content and a good range of resources. For example, Year 6 pupils were very enthusiastic about constructing gas masks as part of their work on life during the Second World War. Detailed organisation of learning, clear routines, appropriate pace and effective behaviour management contributed well to pupils' learning in these lessons.

Where lessons were less successful, explanations lacked clarity and activities were not managed well enough for all pupils to sustain learning at a good pace. Teachers dominated questioning, restricting opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning together and question one another. Assessment of pupils' progress during lessons was not always sharp enough for teachers to redirect pupils precisely when required and maximise their learning.

Pupils' work shows that there is consistent progression in the teaching of writing so that their skills are developed through, for example, extending vocabulary and the use of different forms of writing. Alongside verbal feedback, clear and consistent marking with written pointers that contain good levels of challenge underpins the development of pupils' skills. For instance, in response to prompts to use adjectives, one Year 2 pupil wrote, 'I heard the waves crashing on the rocky, sandy, slippy, steep rocks.'

There have been very substantial improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage learning environment, both inside and outdoors. A suitable safe surface and covered area have been provided outside and this is equipped very well for both adult-led and child-initiated learning. The indoor space is purposefully arranged with well-considered resources that are very effective in capturing children's enthusiasm for the theme, currently pirates. Learning is very well designed around the topic. For instance, while sharing books about pirates, children made rapid progress in understanding the difference between fiction and non-fiction books as well as the purpose of index and contents pages. Vibrant teaching captures children's enthusiasm and fosters their independence well. Tasks are carefully matched to children's needs and questioning builds well on the learning of individuals. Feedback to children on their work is exemplary in acknowledging success, identifying misconceptions and reinforcing high expectations. Although considerable improvements in provision are evident, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of these on children's progress over time.

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

- raise the quality of teaching and assessment to good or better – satisfactory
- improve the teaching of early reading and writing, including the teaching of letter sounds, so that all children make better progress – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy school life, as is evident in their well above-average levels of attendance. The school's high expectations of pupils' behaviour are clearly understood by all and, in the main, pupils rise to these. At lunchtimes, background music and presentations help to set a calm and pleasant social atmosphere in the dining hall. Outdoors, pupils enjoy playing together in a well-supervised and well-equipped area. Play leaders and monitors take their responsibilities seriously.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The ambitious and decisive leadership of the executive and associate headteachers has ensured that the school is moving ahead at a faster rate than originally planned. Senior leaders know the school well and so are able to identify and manage any support required. Helpful changes, such as the move to single-age classes, have been managed very effectively. There is a rigorous approach to improving teaching with regular formal and informal lesson observations, checks on pupils' work and reviews of planning. Feedback to staff reflects leaders' high expectations and is thorough, diagnostic and consistent. The programme of training, which helpfully includes teaching assistants, is tightly linked to the areas for development identified through the range of monitoring activities. Coaching is being extended, drawing in all staff, building on good practice and fostering team work.

The appointment to the senior team of an assistant headteacher with expertise in early reading and writing has brought additional valuable skills to the school's leadership. In a very short period he has reviewed the teaching of phonics (letter and sounds) and reading across the school and introduced a very well-ordered approach. Good systems provide staff with pertinent support for this. A stratified approach to one-to-one support for reading has been introduced so that pupils who need most help receive it. The stock of reading books has been reviewed and replenished with titles likely to enthuse pupils. These developments are recent so it is too early to evaluate their impact on pupils' learning.

Significant strides have been made in the management of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Systems are now in place to identify pupils' needs, draw up suitable plans to meet these and review progress towards targets regularly. The effectiveness of support for individuals, as well as the impact of interventions, are monitored and helpful feedback provided for teaching assistants. Liaison with a broad range of agencies enables the school to meet the particular needs of those pupils who require specialist support.

Developments to the creative curriculum have continued apace. All subjects are planned for within thematic frameworks which start from pupils' questions. Pupils feel they play a clear role in directing their own learning. The planning is thorough and builds in the development of skills, such as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and opportunities for extended writing in a range of genres. Staff reflect on the effectiveness of planning as the theme moves forward and make adjustments as required. The assessment of pupils' progress across the subjects involved is developing. High quality work is emerging through this thematic approach, for instance, in art and dance. This is contributing positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, Year 3 pupils have gained an insight into the impact of carnival on people's hopes for life.

The governing body has established a committee to monitor and report on the progress of the school. Members know the school well and draw on a broad range of information in order to evaluate progress. They provide a good level of challenge as well as supporting the school practically. The school uses a range of channels to keep families well informed about their child's progress and school life. Parents and carers spoken to are positive about developments.

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

- secure and improve the longer-term leadership, governance and staffing of the school – good
- ensure that all pupils study the full range of subjects – good
- ensure that during the transition to federated school status, pupils remain well-supported and parents and carers are kept fully-informed of developments – this issue has been dealt with in full.

External support

During the spring term the local authority provided considerable good quality support, particularly with regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since then the level of local authority support has decreased in response to the school's growing ability to manage its improvement. Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress provide helpful feedback to the school's leaders and the governing body.