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1 June 2012

Mrs K Hall
Headteacher
Stopsley Community Primary School
Hitchin Road
Luton
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Dear Mrs Hall

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stopsley Community Primary School

Following my visit with Heather Housden Additional Inspector, to your school on 30–31 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 – 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Luton.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment overall and particularly in mathematics so it is consistently above average and no group underachieves by:
 - ensuring that lessons are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities so they make consistently good progress and enjoy their learning
 - using tracking data more effectively to identify underperformance and provide high-quality intervention so pupils catch up quickly.

- Improve the quality of teaching so the majority of lessons lead to good achievement and behaviour by:
 - ensuring all teachers plan and teach learning activities for the full ability range in their class
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so they encourage pupils to think deeply about their responses
 - developing marking so it consistently guides pupils to make improvements to their work
 - ensuring that additional adults are deployed effectively in lessons
 - developing teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics.

- Improve the quality of behaviour in class and on the playground by:
 - ensuring all teachers have a full understanding of the school's strategies for promoting positive behaviour and apply them consistently
 - monitoring the effectiveness of all adults in promoting positive behaviour
 - regularly evaluating the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies
 - developing playground facilities so activities can be separated and pupils have quiet areas to play.

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of middle managers and the governing body by:
 - ensuring they understand their roles and take responsibility for the development of their areas
 - understanding and applying the strategies that highly effective governing bodies and middle managers use to monitor, evaluate and promote school improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Stopsley Community Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 30–31 May 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and examined information about pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors met with the headteacher, executive principal, senior leaders and key subject leaders, members of the school's interim executive board, representatives of the local authority and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the inspection in December 2011, which placed the school in special measures, an interim executive board has replaced the governing body. The work of the headteacher is supported by that of an executive principal. A new assistant headteacher and a new subject leader for mathematics have been appointed. Six teachers have left the school and replacements have been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school has succeeded in raising attainment and increasing pupils' progress at all points. Pupils' achievement, including those who have disabilities and special educational needs, is at least satisfactory and many are making good progress.

Children start in the Reception class with attainment that is broadly in line with that expected for their age. They make good progress and by the time they are ready to join Year 1 their attainment is above average. This is particularly so in their communication, language and literacy. Many of the children quickly gain a remarkably good grasp of the sounds made by letters and words and their attainment in writing far exceeds that expected for their age.

For pupils currently in Year 2 school data and the work in their books show clear improvements since the last full inspection. Standards in reading and mathematics are on course to be broadly average. Standards in writing remain below average, although they are better than in 2011. The most significant gains are in mathematics where attainment has moved from below average to broadly average in little over a term.

Pupils in Year 6 have made rapid progress. The work seen during lessons and in pupils' books shows that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are on course to be broadly average. Again, the most significant improvement is evident in mathematics. While attainment across the board is not yet above average, many of the pupils currently in Year 5 are already exceeding the levels expected for their age.

Marked improvements are also notable in Year 4. These improvements have come about because teachers are planning work that is much better tailored to pupils' abilities and needs than in the past. This has resulted in pupils enjoying their learning much more. Information gained from tracking pupils' progress is also being used far more effectively to identify and respond to any under-performance. Consequently, any pupils showing signs of falling behind are now far better placed to catch up.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Raise attainment overall and particularly in mathematics so it is consistently above average and no group underachieves – good

The quality of teaching

Much of the teaching seen during this monitoring inspection was good, with some which was outstanding. Teachers plan together in the year teams and are well supported by senior leaders and those who have subject responsibilities. The work of the recently appointed subject leader for mathematics is already having a marked impact. As a result, activities are much better matched to pupils' needs and abilities. This is typified by the positive impact of teaching mathematics to groups formed on the basis of pupils' previous progress and the gaps identified in their learning. Pupils in Year 4 who had fallen significantly behind in their attainment are taught for much of the time in groups based on their ability. This has resulted in significant gains for those who have disabilities and special educational needs, lower attaining pupils and for the more able. However, across the school, variations remain in the teaching of the mental and oral aspects of mathematics and opportunities to accelerate pupils' progress even more are sometimes missed.

The improved use of questioning by teachers is encouraging pupils to think more deeply and is extending pupils' knowledge. Frequent and effective use of 'learning partners' ensures pupils are fully engaged and enables them to discuss their work and prepare to answer questions. This approach is especially effective in the Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2, but is not embedded to the same extent in Key Stage 2.

Teachers' marking is now far more consistent and is helping many pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work. However, there are still a number of pupils who are not sufficiently aware of their targets, the stage they have reached or what they need to do to bring about further improvements. Sometimes the final part of lessons is rushed and insufficient time is given to helping pupils to understand the progress they have made and to identify what they need to do next.

The contribution made by teaching assistants to pupils' behaviour and progress has improved significantly. They are involved in planning and are deployed effectively to

work with individuals, small groups and those who have disabilities and special educational needs.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Improve the quality of teaching so the majority of lessons lead to good achievement and behaviour – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

School leaders have implemented a highly effective range of strategies which have resulted in significant improvements in pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtimes. During this monitoring inspection much of the behaviour seen in lessons was excellent. The vast majority of pupils are enthusiastic learners who are eager to contribute during lessons and to answer questions. Their ability to stay focused on activities and to work independently has improved significantly. Pupils attach great value to the school's systems for rewarding them when they achieve well and try their best. They also understand why sanctions are imposed if they misbehave. That said, instances of inappropriate behaviour are now few and far between. Pupils' behaviour and their response during lessons are monitored closely. Those pupils who occasionally find it hard to control their behaviour receive high quality support from teachers and from teaching assistants. The precision and consistency of this support are having a marked impact and enable those who struggle to overcome their problems. One pupil commented, 'Teachers have much higher expectations of us than they used to have.'

Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe. Their behaviour in the playground is also improving and the conflicts that were once frequent are no longer evident. Playground supervisors have been trained to support pupils who previously had behaviour difficulties. An excellent range of activities, including designated quiet areas, have been introduced which capture pupils' interest and help them to play together well. Attendance remains a little below average, but is improving steadily.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Improve the quality of behaviour in class and on the playground – outstanding

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Self-evaluation is accurate and there is a precisely-targeted improvement plan which focuses closely on each of the areas for improvement identified by the December 2011 inspection report. The leadership of the headteacher is proving to be central to the improvements that are taking place. The effectiveness of middle managers, including subject leaders, shows marked improvement. The support they provide for

their colleagues is resulting in improvements to the quality of teaching and in pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. Senior leaders and middle managers are all involved fully in a frequent and rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation. As a result, remaining areas for development are identified and plans put in place to bring about further improvements. Challenging targets are set, as well as timescales and evaluation criteria which are promoting rapid improvement. An example of this is the highly effective programme to promote improved behaviour and progress for the previously challenging Year 4 cohort. This group of pupils had fallen well behind the levels expected for their age but are now making good progress.

The functions of the governing body are now being undertaken effectively by an interim executive board. They provide good support, contribute effectively to monitoring and evaluation and are rigorous in holding the school to account for the quality of its work.

Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe meet current requirements.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of middle managers and the governing body – good

External support

The external support is good and is proving to be effective in promoting the improvements that are taking place. When first submitted, the local authority's statement of action was deemed to be 'not fit for purpose'. The statement has been modified and is now fit for purpose. This is borne out by the improvements that are taking place, to which the local authority is making a helpful contribution. Valuable support is provided by the interim executive board. Significant contributions to the evaluation of improvement planning and progress are also being made by the executive principal, who is the head of a nearby junior school. Senior leaders and subject leaders from the executive principal's school provide support and guidance and act as mentors to colleagues in Stopsley. Teachers from Stopsley have also visited the school of the executive principal.