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Mrs S O'Boyle
Galton Valley Primary School
Brasshouse Lane
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Dear Mrs O'Boyle

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Galton Valley Primary School

Following my visit with Barry Wood, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4–5 July 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 February 2012. 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 – inadequate

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012

- Raise achievement and the quality of teaching so that by July 2013 attainment is at least in line with national averages in mathematics and English, by:
 - ensuring that there is a systematic approach to teaching skills in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics, and providing opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills across the curriculum
 - making effective use of assessment information to ensure that work is always well matched to pupils' abilities
 - assessing pupils' ongoing progress in lessons so that tasks can be adapted if necessary
 - using support staff more effectively to accelerate pupils' learning and to encourage pupils to work independently.

- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders and the governing body in order to secure rapid improvement by:
 - regularly and rigorously monitoring of the quality of teaching and using this information to provide a coherent programme of professional development for all staff
 - regularly checking that assessments are accurate and tracking the progress made by all pupils, groups and classes in order to set challenging targets and to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - training leaders so they have the skills to monitor their areas of responsibility using all evidence, including national data, and to accurately prioritise, plan and evaluate for improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Galton Valley Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 4–5 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of pupils, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, a new deputy headteacher has been appointed who will start at the school two weeks before the end of the summer term. Three teachers have resigned. Two will leave their posts on the 31 August 2012 and the other on the 31 December 2012. The Nursery and one of the Year 1 classes are taught by temporary teachers. At the present time, the school is considering academy status and negotiations are taking place to agree a sponsor.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The progress made by pupils in lessons observed during the monitoring visit varied from class to class. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) make satisfactory progress in their personal social and emotional development. During the inspection, children were observed happily working together, sharing resources willingly and following instructions carefully. Recent assessment information shows that by the end of Reception attainment is below average, which suggests good progress from their well below age-related starting points. However, the evidence supporting these assessments is unreliable and inaccurate. Much of the evidence is from teacher-led activities, rather than through observations of children's independent learning. Records of progress, or 'Learning Journeys', are incomplete and do not record evidence of progress in all six areas of learning expected for these young children. A new system of recording has been introduced in Nursery which is starting to provide a useful record of children's progress.

Attainment is rising in Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 more pupils than in the past have attained the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. However, very few pupils attained the higher levels in these subjects. This lack of challenge is seen in lessons, as too often pupils are given the same task regardless of ability. By the end of Year 6 the proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected level has risen this year, especially in reading. Staff have worked hard to introduce a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), reading, writing and mathematics. All staff have received training in the teaching of phonics and a daily lesson is taught to all relevant pupils. Very recent improvements

in the way guided reading is taught are helping staff to focus more on teaching the skills of reading rather than just listening to pupils read. 'Big Writing' means pupils have the opportunity to write an extended piece of writing each week and 'Snappy Maths' helps pupils to develop their mental mathematics skills. However, the progress made in these lessons is inconsistent as a result of variability in the quality of teaching. Analysis of pupils' work throughout the school shows that pupils' basic skills of literacy including handwriting, grammar and punctuation are weak, especially in subjects other than English.

Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs do not progress as well as they should, considering the extensive additional support available. Interventions are not measured rigorously enough in terms of the impact on pupils' progress. Boys attain less well than girls and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attain less well than other pupils. The headteacher has introduced a useful system for tracking the progress of different groups of pupils and a detailed class analysis is now available for staff to discuss at pupil progress meetings. However, this is a new development, and as yet teachers do not use the information well enough to accelerate the progress of underachieving groups of pupils.

The quality of teaching

There is still too much inadequate teaching and teaching that is no better than satisfactory. The latest monitoring of teaching and learning, carried out by the local authority in conjunction with senior leaders, identifies many key weaknesses throughout the school and these were confirmed by inspectors. As at the time of the previous inspection, the strongest teaching is in Key Stage 2, although there is inadequate teaching in all three key stages. Steps have been taken to rectify the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report, but the impact of this work is embryonic. Most lessons now begin with teachers sharing the learning intention with pupils and how to achieve success in their work. However, the tasks are not always appropriate for pupils' needs as assessment information is not used well enough to plan sufficiently challenging activities for pupils of different abilities. Consequently, the pace of learning, especially for the most-able pupils, is too slow. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas through the use of 'talk partners' and pupils respond enthusiastically to these opportunities for collaboration. On the few occasions when teachers use assessment well, teaching is targeted accurately at pupils' needs. Suitably challenging tasks are set and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, in a Year 4 science lesson pupils were asked challenging questions as they considered how to investigate the effect of water resistance. Pupils responded well to this lively and engaging teaching and made good progress. Some teachers do not check pupils' learning well enough during lessons to assess the understanding of individual pupils and then move them on or consolidate learning as required. This is because teachers ask too few questions, or the questions which they do ask are too simplistic as they do not require pupils to explain their understanding. Often, errors in learning are ignored

and, where teaching is the weakest, teachers do not use mistakes as learning points. During independent work, too often the class teacher takes a monitoring role, rather than using the opportunity to work specifically with a group of pupils and accelerate learning. In most classes, there are many support staff; for example, in one Year 3 class, four support staff were available to work with pupils. Although there are good examples of the usefulness of their roles, as seen in guided reading in Year 5, in many classes pupils are overly dependent on adult support. This means pupils do not have strategies to solve problems for themselves, limiting their independence. Marking remains inconsistent although there is some good practice in writing. In mathematics and other subjects, marking is less useful in moving forward pupils' thinking.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise achievement and the quality of teaching so that by July 2013 attainment is at least in line with national averages in mathematics and English – inadequate

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are friendly, polite and courteous to adults and treat each other with respect. They feel safe in school and say they enjoy their lessons. Those spoken to say things have changed for the better since the last inspection. Although they say their work is now harder and more interesting, they think they could do even more. Across the school good relationships between adults and pupils are notable features. On a very few occasions, staff did not have pupils' full attention and pupils were restless and inattentive. This was linked to weaknesses in teaching, especially when pupils spent too long on the carpet listening to their teacher. Attendance and punctuality have improved this year and the latest attendance figures show that attendance is above the national average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and senior leadership team have energetically begun to tackle the many problems the school faces. The raising attainment plan is appropriate and clearly focuses on the relevant actions necessary to secure improvement. It links well with the local authority action plan. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are now in place and inform strategic planning and the training provided for staff. Extensive training has been provided and there are some early signs of impact, with improved phonics teaching and all leaders aware of their monitoring role. Leadership logs have been introduced in which staff are encouraged to record actions and the impact of their work. However, these are at a very early stage of use and leaders have not yet influenced achievement or the quality of teaching. Self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher's view of teaching matches that of the inspection team.

The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is confusing and does not enable leaders efficiently to monitor pupils' progress. A new system is to be introduced next term. Following a series of meetings held over recent weeks, the headteacher is confident that all assessment information is accurate for Years 1 to 6 pupils. Therefore teachers from September will have an accurate view of pupils' ability and leaders will be better placed to hold them to account for their pupils' progress. However, in the Early Years Foundation Stage there is less confidence in the accuracy of assessments.

The governing body, although fully aware of the weaknesses in provision through the headteacher's reports and feedback from the local authority, has not developed its role of monitoring and evaluating the school's progress. The governing body recognises that as yet it is not fulfilling its role of challenge, and from September it is intended that the standards committee will meet monthly with the headteacher to check improvements made.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders and the governing body in order to secure rapid improvement – inadequate

External support

The local authority's statement of action for the school has been evaluated and is fit for purpose. The local authority has been instrumental in brokering and providing different consultant support to work closely with members of staff. This support is welcomed by staff, who are keen to improve and develop their practice. Crucially it has recognised its role in improving governance and training is planned for the autumn term. Detailed and accurate monitoring reports provide useful information for the termly Task Group meeting.