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15 November 2012

Mrs N Miller
Headteacher
Blanford Mere Primary School
Mimosa Walk
Kingswinford
DY6 7EA

Dear Mrs Miller

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blanford Mere Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13–14 November 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 1 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 – good.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that the more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 and all pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress, particularly in mathematics in the latter stage, by improving the quality of teaching so that:
 - teachers use assessment information more rigorously and, as a consequence, work set meets pupils' needs and they are guided carefully through small learning steps
 - during lessons, teachers check regularly on pupils' learning, address any misconceptions, and ensure that pupils understand how to improve their work
 - the pace of learning in lessons is improved and teachers do not talk for too long
 - teachers' marking consistently provides pupils with clear and focused points for improvement
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to practise and apply their academic skills, especially in numeracy, across the curriculum.

- Strengthen the capacity for sustained improvement by ensuring that:
 - leaders rigorously check how effectively pupils at all levels of attainment are challenged in lessons
 - all plans for improvement are focused sharply on improving pupils' achievement, have measurable outcomes and the effectiveness of the plans is monitored regularly
 - the governing body plays a more active role in monitoring and evaluating pupils' achievement.

Special measures: monitoring of Blanford Mere Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 13–14 November 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, looked closely at documents and met with the headteacher and senior leadership team, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the Chair and other members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit an additional teaching assistant has been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In the 2012 Year 6 national tests, the percentages of pupils achieving National Curriculum Levels 4 and 5 in English were above average. No pupil achieved Level 6; this was similar to the national picture. Mathematics remains weaker because the percentages achieving Levels 4 and 5 were below average, although the percentage achieving Level 6 was broadly average. These results confirmed the school's predictions, based on its own tracking information. At the end of Key Stage 1 the percentage of pupils achieving Level 3 improved, and was above average for both writing and mathematics. Pupils also achieved above the national average at Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

In lessons observed in both key stages, all groups of pupils made at least expected progress. This was because teachers are more confident in using the school's information on the different starting points of pupils in their lesson planning. Work is now better matched to pupils' differing needs. The school has identified a group of pupils who have the potential to reach Level 6, and has tailored support more closely to their needs. It needs to ensure that this level of challenge is provided in all lessons, and not only as part of the support work.

The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is better thought through. Teachers work with the different groups in lessons so that all pupils benefit from their help. Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium are given appropriate extra support, especially with their reading.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is steadily improving. All groups of pupils are making better progress in lessons. All teachers share learning objectives and success criteria with the pupils at the start of each lesson. In some mathematics lessons observed, the teachers had written the objectives only as tasks, instead of identifying exactly what pupils

needed to learn in order to understand and apply the mathematical ideas. This approach limits pupils' progress and their ability to transfer their skills to other units of work and other subjects.

The school has appropriately begun to plan regular opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in all subjects. In literacy, teachers already confidently develop pupils' reading and writing skills in all subjects. Teachers mark work consistently, in line with the new marking policy. Pupils stated that teachers' marking helped them to understand how to improve their work and to make corrections. In some classes pupils write down their own judgements about how well they learnt in response to the teacher's comments. The recently introduced 'stepping stones' booklets encourage pupils to identify what they have learnt and the National Curriculum Level they are working towards. Pupils said they like to 'tally up' the bits they think they have learnt, and teachers then agree or discuss their judgements. Teachers' questioning to probe pupils' understanding has improved, and they generally use the results well to adapt the lesson so that any misconceptions are addressed. In mathematics, however, teachers often move on to the next topic before all pupils' learning is fully secure.

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

- ensure that the more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 and all pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress, particularly in mathematics in the latter stage, by improving the quality of teaching – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour around school and in lessons is good. Pupils are courteous to each other, and to staff and visitors. Parents and carers reported that they had no concerns about their children's behaviour and safety. Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages, and they arrive on time to school and to lessons.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and senior leaders are continuing to work hard to resolve remaining weaknesses. They have further refined their monitoring, so that targets are regularly reviewed and the actions that follow are thought through well. Their work is supported well by the governors, who confidently ask searching questions and demand more detailed information to clarify the effectiveness of leadership and management. As a result governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses increasingly well.

Subject leaders and other staff have begun to look more thoroughly at exercise books and pupils' work. They are beginning to identify areas where there are inconsistencies. Team leaders have begun to coach other staff and share their good

practice. This has helped teaching to improve. This is being monitored by the senior team.

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

- strengthen the capacity for sustained improvement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide high-quality, sensitive support to the school. It provides good challenge to the headteacher and governing body.