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Mr R Fletcher
Headteacher
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Yorklea Croft
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Dear Mr Fletcher

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fordbridge Community Primary School

Following my visit with David Shears, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27–28 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 January 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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 Solihull.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a high proportion is good or better by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have clear and measurable objectives and that activities contain more learning opportunities
 - devising a questioning strategy to be used consistently by adults to ensure that all pupils respond to an appropriately challenging question in each lesson
 - ensuring that teachers check carefully during and at the end of all lessons that pupils have understood the work and this feedback is used to plan subsequent learning.

- Raise Key Stage 2 attainment in English and mathematics so that Year 6 pupils exceed the national average, especially in reading.

- Improve leadership and management throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that action planning at all levels has a few key priorities with measurable success criteria that are focused on improving outcomes for pupils
 - review the management structure to ensure that all post holders are held to account for raising standards
 - improve the leadership of special education needs provision to ensure that all pupils on the special educational needs register have clear targets and appropriate support to achieve them.

Special measures: monitoring of Fordbridge Community Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 27–28 November 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, consultant headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Two teachers remain absent through illness. One teacher left at the end of the summer term and three teachers will be leaving at the end of this term. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in October 2012. As part of the local authority support arrangements, a consultant headteacher continues to support school leaders.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School data, which has been checked by senior leaders and local authority advisers, show that standards are below average but rising in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing, although rising, remain low. In some year groups, such as in Year 4, more than half of the pupils are still not working at the nationally expected level. In response to this the school has introduced specific lessons where teachers focus on spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Pupils also have regular opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

In the latest end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, standards improved and were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2, provisional results show that standards remained well below average in English and mathematics. Pupils who are currently in Years 2 and 6 are expected to reach the standards expected for their age.

Rates of progress are improving overall for pupils of all abilities. Evidence from pupils' work and lesson observations show that progress ranges from outstanding to inadequate. This is due to variations in the quality of teaching. In the majority of lessons observed during this monitoring inspection, progress required improvement.

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

- raise Key Stage 2 attainment in English and mathematics so that Year 6 pupils exceed the national average, especially in reading – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved. The proportion of good and better teaching has increased and the proportion of inadequate teaching has reduced. However, too much teaching requires improvement. Consequently, not enough pupils are making good progress or attaining higher standards.

Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not provide timely support when pupils are finding their work difficult. This slows down the pace of learning. In addition, work is not always well matched to the needs of different pupils; it is on occasions too easy for pupils of average ability and those that are more able. Sometimes, teachers do not clearly explain what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. This leaves pupils confused.

In some lessons, pupils make inadequate progress because teachers do not make effective use of assessment information they have about pupils. Consequently, activities are either too easy or difficult. Teachers' subject knowledge is also weak. As a result, teachers do not always know how to clarify misunderstandings pupils may have, or how to adjust the lesson to better meet the needs of pupils.

Where teaching is good or better, work is well matched to the learning needs of different pupils, and it effectively builds on what pupils already know. Teachers also use skilful questioning to help pupils explain their thinking. All these features were observed in one outstanding lesson, where the teacher encouraged pupils to use emotive language while writing a newspaper article about natural disasters. The teacher successfully used music and images to inspire the pupils as they worked.

The quality of teachers' marking has strengthened. Teachers are increasingly telling pupils how to improve their work. In some classes in Years 5 and 6, pupils regularly respond to teachers' comments and correct mistakes in their work. Sometimes, the teachers written comments for pupils in Key Stage 1 are too complex. As a result, pupils do not always understand what they need to do to improve.

Some improvements are apparent in the Early Years Foundation Stage. With useful advice and support from the consultant headteacher and local advisers, teachers are becoming more adept at planning activities which are interesting for the children. Activities are still not always well matched to children's different learning needs. During discussions, teachers and teaching assistants occasionally miss opportunities to ask questions which further develop children's learning.

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

- improve the quality of teaching so that a high proportion is good or better – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Relationships between pupils and adults remain positive. In most lessons, the behaviour of the majority of pupils is at least good. Pupils told inspectors that on occasions, a few pupils disrupt the learning of others by shouting out and talking when they should be concentrating on their work. During break times, most pupils continue to play together well. However, at times the behaviour of some pupils can be a little too boisterous. Attendance remains in line with the national average for primary schools. The number of pupils with attendance below 85% continues to reduce.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and consultant headteacher continue to make the necessary changes in the school. In partnership with the local authority, they are providing staff with a suitable range of training and support. The headteacher is taking appropriate action to tackle weaknesses in teaching. He is also in the process of refining the systems for managing the performance of staff to ensure that decisions about whether to pay staff more are guided by information from lesson observations and data about pupils' progress.

Other senior leaders are more aware of what is expected of them in order to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, they remain heavily reliant on direction from the headteacher and the consultant headteacher. They do not have the skills required to lead developments in the school or to provide teachers with effective support.

Middle leaders, with support from the local authority, continue to develop well. The teacher with responsibility for the curriculum is having a particularly positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. She has introduced the 'Fordbridge University'. Each half term, pupils in Key Stage 2 'enrol' on a 'University course' and learn a range of new skills such as engineering, baking, dancing and computing. The middle leaders for mathematics and reading are providing teachers with helpful practical guidance and support. The teacher with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs has trained support staff so that they can provide tailored assistance for pupils who need extra help. This is a recent development and the impact of this work has yet to be seen.

The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluation have improved. Assessment information is beginning to be used more effectively to identify pupils who would benefit from additional targeted support and to hold individual teachers to account. The quality of teaching is checked frequently. However, the systems for collating information following lesson observations, discussions with pupils, and reviews of pupils' work are unwieldy. Targets are set for individual members of staff, but they

are not prioritised. Also, there is no systematic approach to ensuring that once targets have been set they are consistently implemented by all staff in the school.

Action plans have been revised. They do not always identify the precise actions that need to be taken to raise achievement in different subjects or for different groups of pupils.

The governing body has been strengthened with the appointment of a new Chair. In a short space of time he has gained an accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. The Chair has rightly asked all senior leaders to ensure that the information they present to governors evaluates the impact they are having on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Other governors are beginning to ask searching questions about the work of the school and the impact that the school is having on pupils' learning.

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

- improve leadership and management throughout the school – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has provided a good range of support for teachers. This has helped to increase the proportion of good and better teaching and reduce the proportion of inadequate teaching. Effective support from local authority advisors has also helped to strengthen middle leadership. The local authority's review of teaching and learning is accurate and helpful. It contains pertinent advice for the school.