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Karen Porteous
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Porteous

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Barrow Hill Primary School

Following my visit 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 – 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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national averages by:
 - regularly monitoring the performance of individual pupils
 - using assessment information to identify where pupils are making insufficient progress
 - providing support for these pupils to ensure their progress improves and is at least good
 - setting achievable but aspirational targets for each individual pupil and closely monitoring their progress towards them.

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that it has a greater impact on pupils' learning by:
 - providing a greater level of challenge for each pupil
 - increasing the pace of lessons to accelerate the speed at which pupils learn
 - improving marking so that it informs pupils how to improve their work
 - providing more opportunity for pupils to practise and consolidate new learning
 - making sure that tasks build progressively on what pupils already know
 - ensuring that any repetition of work is kept to a minimum and used for consolidation or revision purposes only.

- Improve leadership and management, in particular the monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and the governing body, by:
 - giving all governors a greater understanding of the school's performance
 - ensuring governors work closely with the senior leaders to evaluate what the school is doing well and where it needs to improve
 - using this evaluation to draw up effective plans for improvement
 - ensuring that monitoring of lessons focuses on the impact that teaching is having on learning
 - using assessment and tracking data more effectively to hold teachers to account for the performance of the pupils in their class through regular pupil performance reviews.

- Improve curriculum planning so that pupils' learning progresses systematically as they move through the mixed-age classes by:
 - ensuring that work is planned carefully to provide all pupils in each class with tasks at an appropriate level for their age and ability
 - planning structured opportunities for pupils to practise core skills, particularly reading with understanding, writing for different purposes and problem solving
 - providing better guidance for teachers when planning lessons.

Special measures: monitoring of Barrow Hill Primary School

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

Evidence

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, listened to pupils read and met with the headteacher, members of staff, four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority. Nine joint lesson observations were completed with the headteacher.

Context

This is a very small primary school with children being taught in three classes with up to four year-groups in each class. The deputy headteacher has been on long-term absence and returned to school during the visit but was not observed teaching. One teacher is on long-term absence. During the monitoring visit, two out of the three classes were taught by temporary teachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The improvements evident in the previous monitoring visit continue. Accurate and up-to-date information on pupils' attainment and their progress is recorded and presented in a way that allows for easy analysis. Results of this analysis are shared with teachers to help them identify those pupils or groups making insufficient progress and to provide additional individual or small-group support. Pupils who have special educational needs are often helped to make reasonable progress because of the support they receive. When they are working on their own, the progress made by these pupils is sometimes slowed because they do not understand the questions as the words teachers use are too complicated for them.

Pupils' progress in lessons seen during the monitoring visit was variable in different year groups. A number were making the progress expected. However, pupils were not routinely exceeding the expected rate of progress because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This is particularly the case in the Key Stage 2 class, where teaching is dull and work is not demanding enough because teachers do not give the most-able pupils hard enough work. A particular weakness in mathematics is that pupils are not given enough opportunities to work on problems that require more than two steps to solve and so some pupils lose interest if the solution is not immediately obvious to them.

Work in books in the Key Stage 1 class shows that pupils are not making enough progress over time to reach the expected levels in either the early reading (phonics)

test in Year 1 or the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2. This is largely owing to the frequent changes of teachers in this class.

In contrast, progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage class was brisk and children enjoyed their lessons. For many, skills in early reading, writing and mathematics are very low. Children are doing well because the teachers successfully build on what children know and can do, and have a good understanding of how young children learn. The children are settling well into school routines and, as a result, are better able to show that they are ready to learn. Children are developing a love of reading, and are keen to show adults how many sounds they know and how many simple words they can read and spell. As a result, their early reading skills (phonics) are improving rapidly. Children's early writing is also improving because they are given more opportunities to practise their writing at the same time as their reading.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national averages – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Inconsistent teaching and frequent changes of teachers are key factors preventing the school from moving pupils' achievement to good. However, teaching is improving, with less inadequate teaching seen during this monitoring visit.

Where inadequate teaching was seen, many activities were too easy. Teachers' planning, especially for writing and mathematical tasks, did not focus well enough on developing key skills and did not ensure that each activity demanded enough from older pupils. Also teachers did not check pupils learning well enough during lessons to assess the understanding of individual pupils and then either move them on to harder work or provide support for those who needed extra help. This is because teachers either asked too few questions or the questions that they did ask were too easy and did not require pupils to explain their understanding or how they worked out their answer.

The better teaching seen, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, was lively and easily captured and sustained children's interest. Teachers provided a range of interesting activities, both indoors and outdoors, so that children were beginning to develop their social skills and self-confidence to try new things. No time was wasted and lessons moved at a brisk pace. Teachers constantly checked pupils' understanding so that any misconceptions were quickly sorted out. As a result, pupils made good progress in their learning. For example, in an Early Years Foundation Stage phonics lesson, children's motivation was high and their progress good as they worked together to show that they could read and spell simple words such as 'fix', 'zip' and 'bang'.

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

- improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that it has a greater impact on pupils' learning – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance continues to improve but is below average. The headteacher and other staff have worked closely with pupils, parents and carers to raise levels of attendance and improve on the number who get to school on time. Absences are swiftly followed up and the unacceptability of being late is reinforced at the start of school. As a result, fewer pupils are frequently absent.

Relationships between adults and pupils are generally positive. Behaviour has improved in response to a range of strategies introduced by the school. Pupils work and play together well. They generally respond well to instructions both in the classroom and around school.

The stay and play and 'Men behaving dadly' groups have shown pupils and parents and carers that learning can be fun. Older pupils' are taking part in the 'Rotary Award' for poetry writing. This successfully encourages pupils to take part in events in their local community and to make sure that their work is the very best it can be. It is developing their speaking and listening skills.

Members of the governing body are currently updating all of the school's risk assessments to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

There is clear evidence of improvement since the previous monitoring visit. The headteacher is increasingly providing strong leadership and has a good understanding of the school's deep-seated weaknesses. Improving the quality of teaching is seen as vitally important to realising the headteacher's desire for Barrow Hill to become a good school.

The headteacher has taken the right steps to eradicate inadequate teaching. The work to support teachers with planning lessons, improving marking and setting work that is of the right level for pupils in each mixed-age class is carefully monitored by the headteacher. She checks on the quality of teachers' work and pupils' progress frequently through visits to classrooms and regular meetings. These checks place good emphasis on the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning and progress. Follow-up visits and access to good-quality training are planned to check that areas for development for individual staff have been acted upon. However, the impact of this good work is not showing the results it should because the school has had many changes of teachers due to teachers' frequent absences and new teachers starting.

The information that teachers collect about pupils' attainment and progress is plentiful. It is analysed in detail to identify levels of achievement of year groups, but not for different groups of pupils such as those who require extra help or those for whom the school receives additional funding (pupil premium). This means the headteacher does not check carefully enough on which programmes are having the greatest effect on raising their attainment.

Governance is improving. Additional governors, good-quality training and support from a national leader of governance have helped the governing body to ask searching questions about the school's performance. Governors are checking the information that the governing body receives from the headteacher much more carefully and, as a result, they are increasingly aware of what the school does well and its most important weaknesses. Since the previous monitoring visit, several governors have undertaken a scrutiny of pupils' work, conducted learning walks with the headteacher, and reviewed and updated all of the required policies.

The newly appointed leaders for early reading, Early Years Foundation Stage and special educational needs, are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are beginning to contribute to school improvement. They are aware of the significance of the role they need to play in raising attainment. Other adults and support staff now play a major role in pupils' learning, especially in the teaching of early reading and phonics. They report that they feel more valued and part of the whole-school team.

The relationship with parents and carers has improved significantly. Parents and carers are much more involved in the everyday life of the school and speak very positively about the improvements made by headteacher. They particularly like the training and workshops provided by the school to help them better understand how they can support their child's reading.

The school has quite rightly concentrated on improving teaching and learning, and has delayed further work on reviewing the way subjects, topics and themes are organised until there are a full complement of permanent staff in place.

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

- improve leadership and management, in particular the monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and the governing body – good
- improve curriculum planning so that pupils' learning progresses systematically as they move through the mixed-age classes – not evaluated at this visit.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support through its advisers and local partner schools. Monitoring of the school's performance by the local authority is

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rigorous and accurate. The governing body has benefited from training on understanding and interpreting data, and on how to check the quality of the school's work so that it can ensure stronger governance of the school.