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Sarah O'Boyle  
Headteacher  
Galton Valley Primary School  
Brasshouse Lane  
Smethwick  
B66 1BA

Dear Mrs O'Boyle

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Galton Valley Primary School**

Following my visit with Alan Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5–6 December 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 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 – 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 5–6 December 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, looked carefully at documents, checked teachers' planning and pupils' work, analysed performance data and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, five teachers have resigned. Three teachers who were absent then have returned. At the time of this monitoring inspection there were three temporary teachers. The governing body appointed an assistant headteacher, also the inclusion manager, in September 2012. A deputy headteacher, responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and early reading, has been appointed for January 2013. It has been agreed that the school will become an academy, but no date has been finalised as negotiations are still taking place regarding the preferred sponsor.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

The 2012 unvalidated Year 6 National Curriculum test results were similar to those of 2011. Results were broadly average in mathematics, and although the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level rose slightly in reading, attainment in writing declined. Overall attainment in English was well below average. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher National Curriculum levels in English and mathematics was well below average. However, more pupils than in 2011 attained the higher levels, indicating good progress from these pupils' starting points in Year 3.

The Year 2 teachers' assessments remained well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils than in the past attained the expected level in all three subject areas, although few attained the higher levels.

Current information shows that attainment is generally rising across the school, and more pupils are on track this year to attain the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stages. However, progress remains inconsistent and ongoing staff changes make it difficult to establish consistency in the way teachers plan lessons and use assessment information. Some teaching that is still inadequate or requires improvement is preventing pupils from making consistently good year-on-year progress. In Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 attainment is broadly in line with age-related expectations in writing and mathematics, but in Years 3 and 4 it is below the level expected and progress is slow.

Progress is fastest in Years 5 and 6, where teaching is consistently good or better. The progress made by boys is improving this term, as is that of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This is because teachers are making better use of information about what these pupils already know to plan future learning.

Pupils are developing early reading skills well, including knowing the names of letters and the sounds they make (phonics). In the sessions observed in Reception and Year 1, all adults showed good subject knowledge, planning was detailed and pupils were grouped appropriately by ability. Reading is being promoted well and all classrooms now have attractive reading areas. In all year groups, most pupils are working at or above age-related expectations in reading.

Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last visit as a result of better teaching and a more appropriate balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities. Assessments are now accurate and based on observations of children's independent learning. The records of children's progress – their 'Learning Journeys' – give an accurate picture of children's achievements in all areas of learning since September.

The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving, and the work in their books reflects satisfactory progress in most year groups. The new inclusion manager has worked closely with teachers to ensure they are aware of the levels pupils are working at and that the work planned meets their needs. Support staff now know more about how to help pupils, as seen in Year 5 when teaching assistants provided good support during a guided reading session. The progress made by individuals is discussed during half-termly pupil progress meetings, and staff are beginning to review and evaluate the impact of help and guidance provided for these pupils.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving. Some teaching that required improvement at the time of the last visit is now good, and more good and outstanding teaching was observed during this visit. However, in Years 2, 3 and 4, in a small number of lessons some teaching still requires improvement or is inadequate.

In the better lessons, teachers maintain a good pace and involve pupils actively in their learning. This results in good levels of motivation. In a lively mathematics lesson for Year 6 pupils, good questioning and well-planned activities ensured no time was wasted as pupils discussed the meaning of a line graph. More demanding work is planned for more-able pupils as a result of grouping pupils in ability sets for English and mathematics. Most teaching assistants provide effective support, and strike a good balance between supporting pupils when they are stuck and encouraging independence.

Teachers are now taking more responsibility for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, often supporting them in group sessions and helping them to close gaps in their learning. Teaching assistants are now more clearly focused on developing these pupils' learning, as seen to good effect when a teaching assistant helped a small group of Year 5 pupils to understand more about fractions.

The teaching of phonics has improved since the last visit. In the sessions observed, pupils used their knowledge well to read unknown words. The use of reading targets on bookmarks provides helpful reminders, which older pupils say they find useful to help them with their work.

Where teaching is weaker the pace of learning is not rapid enough to overcome underachievement. In all classrooms teachers routinely share the purpose of lessons with their pupils, who are clear about 'what I am learning today'. However, the intended learning is sometimes confused with the activity to be carried out. Also the checking of individual pupils' progress is not always sharp enough. Some teachers do not recognise that pupils' misunderstandings are a result of their own weak explanations of the task, rather than pupils not paying sufficient attention. Displays known as 'learning walls' include key vocabulary and prompts to help support pupils' learning in English, but not in mathematics.

The marking of pupils' work has improved since the last visit. The good practice noted in the marking of writing is now also seen in mathematics. Teachers' written comments provide specific guidance about how work can be improved, and it is clear that this guidance is often followed up by pupils. However, simple errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling are not corrected consistently well when pupils are recording their ideas in other subjects.

Progress since the last monitoring 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 – satisfactory.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons is typically good. They are polite and considerate to each other and to adults. In lessons pupils display good attitudes to learning, obviously enjoying their work. The use of 'talking partners' is now evident throughout the school and pupils welcome the opportunities to share ideas. Inspectors spoke to pupils about different types of bullying. They said that while incidents of bullying are rare, there are occasions when racist and homophobic language is used. Even so, pupils say they feel safe, and are confident that the school would deal quickly with these incidents when they occur. Attendance continues to improve and is now well above average, and pupils' punctuality is good.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The effectiveness of the senior leadership team has increased considerably through the appointment of the additional deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. These leaders are good role models as teachers, and bring enthusiasm and a wide range of expertise to the team. They have a clear understanding of their roles in improving teaching and raising achievement. The impact of their action plans can already be seen in the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and better teaching in some year groups. Some of the permanent teachers say that useful advice has been given to them to help improve their teaching skills. Support staff say they know more about how to support pupils' learning, as a result of the training they have received.

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, continues to lead by example and to provide a clear vision for school improvement. The recently introduced assessment and tracking system is efficient, and enables leaders to quickly identify underachievement and monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. The specific targets set for teachers' performance are based appropriately on pupils' achievement. Regular pupil progress meetings with teachers focus on individual pupils who are underachieving, and identify suitable strategies to accelerate their progress. Bringing all teaching up to at least a good level is taking longer than anticipated due to staff absences, resignations and the use of temporary teachers who are unfamiliar with agreed school practices.

Improvement planning is based on judgements that are realistic and accurate. The sharply-focused 'raising achievement plan' sets out clear targets, and milestones to ensure that they are achieved. Subject leaders such as those in charge of science and information and communication technology are developing their skills well. Their leadership logs show good evidence of how they are improving teaching and learning opportunities in their areas of responsibility.

The governing body is monitoring improvements in the school well, supported by a 'task group' that is overseen by the local authority. The newly formed standards committee meets regularly, and meeting records show it is developing well in terms of asking searching questions. The Chair and Vice Chair are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are clearly checking that weaknesses are being rectified. The governors are still being distracted by the delay in finalising the arrangements for converting to academy status, which means that consultations with parents, staff and pupils have not yet begun.

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

- improve the effectiveness of all leaders and the governing body in order to secure rapid improvement – good.

## **External support**

This term the local authority has provided considerable good-quality support. For example, the phonics training led by a local authority consultant has resulted in a marked improvement in the teaching of early reading skills, and the advanced skills teacher provided to work with the Early Years Foundation Stage staff has helped to improve children's education. Focused training for support staff has helped them to develop their role within the classroom. The partnership with another local school continues to be a strong source of support, particularly for the headteacher.