

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9169
Direct email: elizabeth.rashvand@serco.com



7 March 2013

Ms Jill Bennett
Headteacher
Priory Primary School
Limes Road
Priory Estate
Dudley
DY1 4AQ

Dear Ms Bennett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Priory Primary School

Following my visit with Marilyn Mottram, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 5–6 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and accelerate the progress made by all pupils in order to raise attainment in all year groups by:
 - ensuring that there is a systematic approach to teaching skills in reading, writing and mathematics, and by providing regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills across the curriculum
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and ensuring that lesson activities are engaging and well-matched to the needs of pupils
 - ensuring that marking tells pupils what they need to do to improve and that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to respond to the advice given
 - using support staff effectively to help pupils learn.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
 - ensuring that information about pupils' disabilities and special educational needs is reviewed and shared appropriately so that their needs are planned for and met
 - improving attendance
 - ensuring that actions taken to improve the conduct of pupils who frequently misbehave are sufficiently rigorous to significantly reduce instances of poor behaviour
 - providing a range of play equipment and constructive activities at breaks and lunchtimes
 - promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by giving them more opportunities to enjoy, explore and learn about different cultures and the arts.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in order to secure rapid improvement by:
 - putting into place, with immediate effect, suitable arrangements to ensure that all staff use the correct procedures to prioritise and record cases where safeguarding concerns are identified
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders and managers
 - ensuring that the governing body holds leaders to account.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 5–6 March 2013

Evidence

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, a representative from the local authority, members of staff and groups of pupils. The monitoring inspection focused on the improvement issues identified at the last inspection. The associate headteacher was unavailable to meet during the monitoring inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the acting headteacher has been appointed as headteacher from February 2013. One assistant headteacher has been appointed acting deputy headteacher. The other assistant headteacher has left. The special educational needs coordinator left in December and her duties have been picked up by a seconded assistant headteacher for inclusion who is new in post. An associate headteacher is working with the school three days a week. The previous executive headteacher left her role in January 2013. Two phase leaders (both in Key Stage 2) have left the school. In addition, five other teachers have left and two more are due to leave shortly. During the inspection visit, five of the eighteen teaching posts were not filled and were covered by supply teachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement continues to be very low in the school. Children do not make enough progress when they join the school at a very low starting point in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain very low. This has been as a result of too much inadequate teaching and staffing disruption caused by long absences and high staff turnover. The majority of pupils currently in Key Stage 2 have not made the expected progress from the end of Year 2 and, consequently, the gap in attainment with the national average has widened.

In about two-thirds of the lessons seen during the monitoring inspection, pupils were making at least the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics. In a few lessons, progress was good. This is an improvement on progress seen in the previous monitoring visit. Few pupils are making the rapid progress they need to make if they are to reach age-related expectations by the time they leave. In some classes, there is no significant difference in the rate of progress of more or less able pupils, or those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Elsewhere, there is a marked difference in rates of progress where teachers' expectations are lower for less-able pupils and the work set is not sufficiently challenging. Pupils still

do not have sufficient basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology to apply to other areas of their learning

The quality of teaching

There have been some improvements in teaching, with a slightly larger proportion that is now good and fewer lessons judged as inadequate. That said, the very large turnover of staff, a number of teacher vacancies and the legacy of a very high proportion of previously inadequate teaching means that progress in improving teaching has been limited.

In the small proportion of good lessons, teachers set work that is appropriately challenging for all groups of learners. Additional adults are deployed well to provide effective support and pupils are gaining in confidence to work on their own or in small groups. Teachers' feedback and marking gives pupils a clear idea of how they can improve.

There are still too many lessons characterised by an extended introduction where teacher talk dominates. Pupils, particularly the less able and those who have special educational needs, are either set tasks that are too easy or which rely on constant support from an additional adult who is rarely the class teacher. Teachers are consistently setting different tasks for each group but the extent to which they are appropriate is variable. The needs of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language are not always perceived by teachers to be different to those of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs.

Additional adults tend to be mainly focussed on the least able pupils but are occasionally deployed to work with a wider range of pupils and contribute to on-going assessment of pupils' learning.

A new assessment system has been introduced very recently in literacy which highlights what pupils have achieved and what they could improve. Teachers are using the scheme but it is a very early stage and the quality of marking remains very variable.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are very positive about the continued improvements in behaviour. They are clear that, over the last few months, there has been a noticeable difference, both in lessons and around school. Disruption in lessons has been significantly reduced. Pupils talk confidently about the new 'good to be green' policy and feel that any instances of unacceptable behaviour are now dealt with quickly and fairly. They describe the rewards, particularly afternoon tea with the headteacher, as a privilege.

The school's own behaviour records show a significant reduction in incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils enjoy the wide range of play equipment and organised activities available to them at lunchtime and break times. Pupils know that these improvements are in the early stages and they are keen for them to become the normal way of life in school.

The school has taken effective action to improve attendance and this is beginning to have an impact, particularly in reducing persistent absence. The introduction of systems to check individual pupils' attendance is working well. The school is developing closer links with parents over attendance. School records show that overall attendance is improving slowly but there is still too much variability from week to week and from class to class.

The school has reviewed pupils' individual learning targets, particularly for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This information has been shared with all staff. Staff training has recently taken place. It is too early to say how far this is helping teachers to plan for and meet these pupils' needs.

Pupils were enthusiastic about the recent diversity week, when they explored life in other countries and followed this up with an assembly on racism. They enjoy studying art and music from around the world, mask-making and learning about different languages. They recently contributed prayers and readings to a memorial service for a famous former pupil, footballer Duncan Edwards. The school is aware that promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development needs to play a greater part in regular lessons and a team has been established to develop this.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim executive board has acted swiftly to appoint a permanent headteacher and ensure that the senior leadership team has been strengthened. The headteacher leads by example to ensure that all senior leaders and members of staff are working together with a common purpose and vision. She recognises clearly that expected progress is not good enough for pupils if they are to reach the national average level of attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The school's raising achievement plan is now more focused and realistic but does not spell out specifically enough when pupils' goals and targets will be achieved. A number of other leadership roles in the school have still to be filled. The school does not have a permanent numeracy coordinator in post.

Changes to safeguarding procedures have been maintained, and systems are robust and thorough. Pupils feel safer with the new gates and badges for visitors but feel anxious about the conduct of a small minority of parents at the school gates. The rapid improvements in behaviour and safety have been sustained by senior leaders.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching through regular checks in lessons and analysis of pupil achievement data. Not all other leaders' roles are sufficiently developed to check the quality teaching in their area of responsibility. In some instances, there is not yet a subject leader in place.

In a short space of time, the interim executive board has identified the school's key priorities for improvement and is now fulfilling its dual role to support the school and hold it to account.

External support

The local authority has continued to be highly supportive of the school, particularly over the rapid action to appoint a permanent headteacher and in arranging links with local schools identified for their good practice in teaching and in Early Years Foundation Stage provision. A recent review accurately identified where the school had made progress and where there are still shortcomings in teaching.