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Rob Fletcher  
Headteacher  
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Birmingham  
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Dear Mr Fletcher

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fordbridge Community Primary School**

Following my visit with Mary Usher-Clark, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12–13 June 2013, 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 fourth 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.

Two newly qualified teachers may be appointed if guidance and support is provided by the senior leaders whose quality of teaching is consistently good or better.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 12–13 June 2013**

#### **Evidence**

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

#### **Context**

Five class teachers have resigned and will be leaving the school at the end of the summer term. Three new teachers have been appointed. The governing body is in the process of recruiting a further two teachers. A Reception class teacher has taken responsibility for leading and managing the Early Years Foundation Stage on a temporary basis. In January 2012, the local authority arranged for a consultant headteacher to provide support for senior leaders. This support came to an end in April 2013. A headteacher from a local school has recently started to provide support for the two deputy headteachers.

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

Across the school, standards in mathematics and reading are closer to what is expected. Pupils enjoy reading and are successfully taught how to use a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words and decipher new texts. In mathematics, pupils in most classes have regular opportunities to use their knowledge of number to solve complex mathematical problems. Standards in writing are rising, but remain low in a few year groups. For instance, in Year 4, over half of the pupils are working below the standard expected for their age. Senior leaders have introduced suitable changes to the way in which writing is taught. Some teachers are now placing a greater emphasis on pupils' spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. Although this is a recent development, pupils' work indicates that it is beginning to make a positive difference to standards in writing in a number of classes.

Progress remains better in some classes than others because of continuing differences in the quality of teaching. Most children in the Nursery, and pupils in Years 1 and 6, are now making good progress. In Years 2 and 5, pupils' progress is improving in many classes. In Reception, and Years 3 and 4, pupils' progress remains variable. Pupils do not always make enough progress in these year groups.

A small proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) are not making as much progress as other pupils in the school.

In a few lessons, pupils who need extra help do not always make the progress of which they are capable. This is because they are not always provided with the right resources or given the opportunity to complete their work on their own. In contrast, they achieve well when they receive high-quality support from teaching assistants. Some pupils, for instance, have significantly improved their ability to read and gained two years' progress with their reading.

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**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there has been a slight improvement in the quality of teaching. In the majority of lessons observed during this inspection, pupils made good or better progress. The quality of teaching, as reflected in pupils' work, shows that teaching is better but not consistently good in all classes. A small proportion of teaching remains inadequate. As a consequence, pupils' progress varies between classes and subjects.

In the strongest lessons, teachers made good use of assessment information to effectively match activities to the learning needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants asked questions which successfully extended pupils' thinking. Activities were also adjusted partway during the lesson to make them more challenging, especially for more-able pupils. The activities were interesting and engaging, and inspired pupils. In one particularly effective example, pupils had to divide a bar of chocolate into two in as many different ways as possible. The pupils were told that they had to work systematically and could not simply split the chocolate bar in half. The pupils successfully used their knowledge of numbers to solve this problem.

In the lessons where pupils made expected rather than good progress, the pace of learning was not quick enough. This was because teachers spent too long introducing lessons and this reduced the time available for pupils to learn by applying skills and knowledge in the activities set. On occasions, teachers stopped pupils while they were working in order to provide information that was not essential to completing the activities. In a few lessons, pupils made inadequate progress because the activities did not build on what pupils could already do. They were either too easy or too difficult. Teachers also had low expectations of the quality and quantity of work pupils were expected to produce. For instance, poor presentation and errors in spelling and grammar were readily accepted in some classes in Years 3 and 4.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, further improvements have been made to the Nursery and one of the Reception classes. In these classes, resources are well organised. The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage ranges from good to inadequate. Children of different abilities made good progress when the activities were suitably challenging and captured their imagination. When adults asked all children, regardless of their ability, to complete the same activity, they made inadequate progress. The activities that children chose for themselves were sometimes too easy. For instance, in one lesson, a group of children coloured in a picture of an aeroplane rather than drawing and designing their own.

The school's marking policy has been revised. Pupils appreciate it when teachers use highlighters to identify strengths in their work and pinpoint errors. However, the quality of marking remains inconsistent. In some year groups, such as in Year 1, teachers' marking is highly effective and is helping pupils to correct their own work. Pupils have a clearer understanding of their individual learning targets for reading, writing and mathematics and what they have to do to achieve these targets.

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**

More interesting and relevant activities in lessons are contributing to improvements in pupils' behaviour. In the past, pupils have not always fully participated in lessons and, on occasions, have been too quiet. Now, pupils are keen to join in class discussions, and enjoy talking about their work. They tackle activities with determination and remain focused, even when activities are not suitably challenging. Pupils who occasionally find it difficult to behave well are sensitively supported by adults and encouraged to continue with their learning.

Pupils do not have enough equipment to make playtimes more exciting. This can occasionally lead to boisterous behaviour. Some parents and pupils who spoke with inspectors would like resources to be made available during break times.

Attendance has dipped slightly and is now just below the national average for primary schools. The school is planning on increasing the range of rewards in order to encourage all pupils to attend more regularly.

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

The headteacher continues to provide strong leadership and tackle weaknesses in teaching. There is a greater sense of teamwork, with many staff working together to

bring about the required improvements. The revised school action plan correctly identifies where further improvements are required. Actions are prioritised and focused on improving rates of pupil progress. Arrangements for managing the performance of senior staff have been strengthened further. All senior leaders are now aware of the precise actions they need to take to help pupils make faster progress and strengthen the quality of teaching. While these are all positive developments, a small proportion of pupils continue to underachieve, particularly those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. This is because the leader responsible for checking pupils' progress does not take urgent and effective action when weaknesses are identified. The Chair of the Governing Body is continuing to provide this leader with specific support in order to increase their effectiveness.

Most senior leaders are good role models for high-quality teaching. The senior leaders with responsibility for reading, writing, mathematics, the curriculum and pupils who need extra help continue to make a positive difference. By working with individual teachers, they have contributed to the steady increase in the good and better teaching. These senior leaders are starting to collate findings from lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work to provide teachers they are supporting with some useful guidance. However, when monitoring, they do not always focus enough on the progress of different groups of pupils or on the individual pupils who are underachieving. Consequently, the actions for improvement they set teachers are not as precise as they could be.

The Chair of the Governing Body continues to provide an effective level of support to the headteacher, while also challenging senior leaders about the performance of pupils. Governors visit the school regularly, with some checking the work of the school for themselves; for instance, by joining senior leaders on brief visits to classrooms and reviewing the quality of pupils' learning. This is helping governors to gain a secure understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The Vice-Chair of the Governing Body continues to provide appropriate guidance to the senior teacher with responsibility for pupils who need extra help. Together, they are carefully and regularly checking the impact of interventions and ensuring that these pupils receive the necessary support. The senior teacher has already identified the need to ensure that all teachers plan activities which better meet the needs of these pupils and encourage them to be more independent.

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

- improve leadership and management throughout the school – satisfactory.

### **External support**

Support from the local authority has rightly reduced, with the headteacher and some senior leaders taking greater responsibility for making the required changes in the

school. The recent local authority review is helpful and correctly identifies the actions that need to be taken to help pupils reach higher standards. The support for the deputy headteachers is recent and the impact of this has yet to be seen. The local authority intends to provide further support for teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the temporary leader responsible for leading developments in the Nursery and Reception classes.