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4 October 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 Rowena Green, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2–3 October 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 fourth 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 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 2–3 October 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, members of staff, and groups of pupils and parents. The lead inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority by telephone and an inspector attended a parents' workshop. All senior leaders took part in joint lesson observations with inspectors.

### Context

All of the recently appointed assistant headteachers have now taken up their posts. Two teachers resigned in July 2013. A number of new teachers started in September 2013. Both Year 5 classes are being taught by supply teachers, covering a maternity leave and a vacancy respectively.

### Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 in the most recent tests was low, as the school had anticipated. Few pupils reached the highest possible levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Despite a more rapid rate of progress in the last two terms, following targeted support in literacy and numeracy from senior leaders, there was too much lost ground for Year 6 pupils to recover following previous years of inadequate teaching.

In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils made good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This was as a result of a good range of free-flow and structured activities, and effective questioning by adults.

Progress was more variable in Key Stage 2, depending on the quality of teaching and additional support. In one Year 6 mathematics lesson for a small low attaining group, pupils made very rapid progress in learning to halve numbers from a very low starting point. This was as a consequence of the high expectations and challenge in the work set and aspirational pupil targets. Elsewhere, while most pupils are making good progress, there are times when progress is not fast enough in order to close the large gap with the national average. Progress slows on occasions where pupils wait too long for adults to set them on to the next stage of their learning.

## **The quality of teaching**

Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was good, and there was an example of outstanding teaching. A small proportion of teaching in Key Stage 2 either required improvement or was inadequate.

Where teaching is best, teachers move pupils on to their learning very quickly and ensure that work is set with an appropriate degree of challenge. Pupils enjoy their learning, particularly from each other in smaller groups. Very little time is wasted on lengthy introductions to lessons. Behaviour and time is managed well by teachers in most classes.

Marking has significantly improved. Pupils respond well to the pink teacher comments in their books and, in the best examples, teachers engage in a dialogue with pupils through these comments. All pupils have been set challenging targets and are beginning to have more opportunities to make choices about their learning; for example, at what level of difficulty they should start for calculating solutions to word problems in mathematics. The best support asks searching questions and allows pupils the time and space to think out answers for themselves.

Where teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, pupils sit passively waiting for help if they do not understand their work. Some pupils are over dependent on the adult support they receive. When more-able pupils complete tasks quickly, there are not always extension tasks available for them to move on to.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils have continued to show a good standard of behaviour in their work, around school and in the playground. They are courteous and polite to visitors and, in lessons, get on well with each other, including those from different backgrounds. They are beginning to take on more responsibility in lessons and in the life of the school. Plans are well advanced to appoint a head boy and girl, and a junior leadership team.

The number of 'red card' incidents is down, and the school is now extending sanctions for pupils who receive 'yellow card' warnings. The rewards are highly popular with pupils, who increasingly regard the implementation of rewards and sanctions as fair. All pupils spoken to report that they feel safe and secure in school. The closure of the main gate to stop cars entering at the start and end of the day has made the school a safer and calmer place to be at these times. All statutory safeguarding arrangements are met.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is being promoted through a revised curriculum which gives pupils access to a wider range of subjects, including languages, music and art. Assemblies maintain links with the local church and

address issues such as school values and choices. The forest schools initiative is promoting pupils' responsibility to take care of the natural world around them.

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

The determined leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has led to rapid improvements. Within a year, the profile of teaching in the school has been transformed from mostly inadequate to mostly good. All senior leaders are able to identify accurately the key strengths and weaknesses in lessons and can lead by example in their own teaching.

All parents spoken to could recognise ways in which the school has got better, particular in behaviour, learning and teaching, greater stability of staffing and the attitude of their children to coming to school. The new homework planners are very popular with parents. Parents very much welcome that senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants are visible and available at the start and end of the school day.

Achievement data is analysed and tracked in depth. Through regular half-termly pupil progress meetings, teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils. Highly challenging targets have been set, including for those pupils who are below the expected level of attainment for their age in English and mathematics. Leaders have ensured that older lower-attaining pupils get access to high-quality teaching and support to give them a chance of closing the attainment gap before they leave at the end of Year 6. More-able pupils are now being identified at an earlier stage to ensure that they make as much progress as they can to reach the highest possible levels.

There has been a large turnover of teaching staff, and plans are in place to revise the provision of teaching assistants. The interim executive board has continued to be a strong and powerful source of support and challenge for senior leaders. Although small in number, members have been highly effective in leading the strategic direction of the school and holding leaders to account for the performance of staff and pupils. Plans are in place for a new extended governing body which will enable the establishment of link governors; for example, in literacy and numeracy.

### **External support**

The role of the local authority has changed as the capacity of the school's senior leadership has grown. Partnership arrangements with a local successful primary school have grown, and dependence on the local authority has diminished. Regular reviews are carried out to ensure that the school is still on track with the improvements it is making. Support for the induction of a new member of staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in place to ensure that provision there remains good.