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Rob Fletcher
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fletcher

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fordbridge Community Primary School

Following my visit with insert Morag Kophamel, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 10–11 December 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 fifth 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 are 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
 - reviewing the management structure to ensure that all post holders are held to account for raising standards
 - improve the leadership of special educational 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 10–11 December 2013

Evidence

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

Context

Four teachers and one assistant headteacher left at the end of the summer term. The governing body appointed four new teachers. They joined the school in September 2013. Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been a number of changes at leadership level. One deputy headteacher relinquished their leadership responsibilities. In order to ensure the responsibilities of senior leaders were more closely aligned to the school's areas for improvement, the headteacher reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the remaining deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, and the four teachers who are responsible for specific aspects of the school's work. In September, the school leadership team was extended to include the teachers responsible for different year groups, for mathematics, and for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The end-of-Year 6 provisional test results show that standards were average in reading and writing and that a higher proportion of pupils reached the level expected for their age than previously. The proportion that reached the level expected for their age also increased in mathematics. Despite this improvement, standards remained well below average in mathematics. The provisional results also show that pupils did not make enough progress during Key Stage 2. These results reflect the impact of previous persistent weaknesses in teaching. Inspection evidence indicates that although pupils in Year 6 made good progress last year, this was not enough to catch up completely on lost learning from previous years. Teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that standards were average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The work seen in books and lessons shows that more of the children in the Nursery and pupils in Years 1, 5 and 6 are now making good progress. There are a number of reasons for this. Teachers ensure that mathematical activities successfully build on what children already know understand and can do. They also make sure that they extend pupils' learning by encouraging them to use their knowledge of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication to solve complicated problems. When pupils are writing, teachers place a strong emphasis on the correct use of punctuation and

grammar. They also make sure that pupils' sentences make sense. This effective practice in mathematics and writing is not yet evident in all classes. Some pupils in Years 2 and 4 do not make sufficient progress. This is because of continuing variability in the quality of teaching. Throughout the school, those who need extra help and the more-able pupils are capable of making faster progress.

A whole-school approach to teaching pupils the sounds that letters make (phonics) is contributing to better progress in reading. Consequently, pupils are becoming more confident with reading unfamiliar words. Senior leaders have recently purchased books containing particular words that will help pupils to practise using their phonic knowledge. Although teachers encourage and reward pupils for reading at home and school, some pupils told the inspector that they do not read regularly at home.

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

Teaching continues to improve, as shown in the school's and the local authority's monitoring records. During this monitoring inspection, the quality of teaching observed was not as strong as in the recent local authority review. Nevertheless, lesson observations and the work in pupils' books confirm that just over half of the teaching is now good or better. The remainder continues to require improvement and a small proportion in Key Stages 1 and 2 remains inadequate.

Where teaching was most effective, teachers ensured that activities successfully built on what pupils of different abilities already knew. Teachers also used questions skilfully during the lesson to check pupils' understanding. They then used the feedback from pupils to move them on to new learning as soon as they were ready, or responded promptly to those experiencing difficulties. Teachers made sure that the more-able pupils started the lesson with sufficiently challenging work. Pupils who needed extra help were provided with a good range of practical resources to help them complete their work. In one effective example, a group of Year 2 pupils were asked to work out how many sheep and shepherds were needed to ensure that there were a total of 12 legs in a field. The pupils had to find as many different combinations as they could. Those who needed extra help were provided with images and figures of sheep and shepherds. This helped them to count carefully the number of legs and successfully find a range of solutions.

There were a number of reasons why pupils did not make good progress in some of the lessons observed. The activities for more-able pupils were often too easy. Occasionally, teachers did not explain clearly what pupils were expected to learn by the end of the lesson, and as a result pupils were confused and made mistakes. In a few instances, the input from teaching assistants prevented more-able pupils and

those requiring extra help from making good or better progress. An example of this was seen during a mathematics lesson. The teaching assistant showed pupils how to add different amounts of money, but did not set those who knew what to do a more difficult task. In both Reception classes, the activities that children were choosing for themselves were not always sufficiently challenging and it was not always clear what children were expected to learn. This slowed down their learning.

Teachers' marking continues to improve but remains inconsistent. There are some particularly effective examples. In Years 1, 5 and 6 for instance, teachers are identifying what pupils need to do to improve their work. In addition to acknowledging pupils' achievements in writing, they are also checking that pupils are using punctuation and grammar correctly. In a few classes, teachers are allowing pupils to scribble in their books and are not ensuring that they form their numbers and letters correctly or neatly.

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

Pupils told the inspector that behaviour in lessons and around school 'is better'. Inspection evidence confirmed this, but also that behaviour continues to require improvement. In lessons, most pupils listen carefully and talk about their work enthusiastically. During group activities, pupils are keen to share their ideas and respect each other's views. When pupils find their work too easy or too challenging, some of them become disinterested. When this happens, teachers and teaching assistant do not always encourage these pupils to remain focused. During this monitoring inspection, a few instances of disrespectful behaviour were seen. In one lesson pupils were shouting out and not paying attention to the teacher, who was giving the class instructions on how to complete an activity.

Additional playground equipment is contributing to better behaviour at lunch times. Pupils said that adults listen to any concerns they may have and respond quickly to the small number of name-calling incidents. Pupils in Key Stage 1 move around the school quietly and calmly. Some pupils in Key Stage 2 are noisy as they walk around the school.

Attendance dipped last academic year and was below the national average for primary schools. The school has continued to encourage regular attendance by using a wide range of rewards. Since September, attendance has improved. It is currently broadly average. The number of pupils arriving late at the start of the school day is small and reducing.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher continues to maintain a strong focus on raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching. The members of the newly formed leadership team have an accurate understanding of the achievement of different groups of pupils. This term they have used this information well to identify weaknesses and take appropriate action. For instance, pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs have clear targets for improvement and are now receiving suitable targeted support. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are receiving specific support to help them develop further their speaking and listening skills. All these recent and positive developments have yet to make a significant impact on pupils' progress.

With support from local authority advisers, teachers responsible for subjects and aspects of the school's work have revised the school's action plans. These plans accurately reflect the most pressing priorities. The actions within the plans are appropriate and strongly focused on raising pupils' achievement.

Senior leaders are checking the work of staff more regularly. Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain in teaching. This is because senior leaders sometimes focus too much on what the teacher needs to do, and not enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. As a result, the feedback to teachers is not always precise enough to help all groups of pupils make accelerated progress.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body continue to provide senior leaders with an appropriate level of support and challenge. They are meeting regularly with leaders to check how well pupils are learning and to discuss the impact of their actions on the quality of teaching. The governors are well informed by senior leaders. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are reviewing their roles and responsibilities to ensure more governors are involved in checking the work of the school for themselves.

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 continued to reduce. The recent local authority review has identified accurately what the school needs to do to improve further. Local authority advisers have helped senior leaders to make accurate assessments and to write detailed and accurate action plans for their areas of responsibility. Teachers are benefiting from the support and training they are receiving from a number of local schools. This is contributing to improvements in teaching.