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Mrs C Barnard
Consultant Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barnard

Implementation of the Langley Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mrs J Austin HMI and Mr C Kempton HMI to your school on 6 and 7 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made reasonable progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Sandwell. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 23 lessons or parts of lessons, three registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the consultant headteacher, the chair of governors and the LEA's school improvement officer. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the consultant headteacher, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the LEA.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last visit. Of the 23 lessons observed, all were at least satisfactory, five were good, and two, very good. In the majority of lessons the teachers prepared very thoroughly and the lesson objectives were clear. In the most successful lessons, the pace was brisk and the pupils were well supported and challenged; effective use was made of open questions to encourage the pupils to articulate their thinking. Behaviour was well managed and relationships strong. Appropriate use was made of praise to encourage the pupils. However, in too many lessons the pace was pedestrian. The teachers tended to dominate proceedings so that the pupils became passive observers of the teaching rather than active participants in their learning. Whole class teaching was aimed largely at the average-attaining pupils and insufficient attention was given to targeted questioning to ensure that all participated in the lesson. As a consequence, lower-attaining pupils, especially the boys, quickly lost focus. The more-able pupils often worked on tasks independently of the teacher and, as a result, their work rate was slow. In the foundation subjects, lessons were too task oriented with insufficient attention placed on the development of subject specific skills, knowledge and understanding.

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils have improved. They were satisfactory in eight lessons, good in 12 and very good in three. The behaviour policy is having a positive impact throughout the school and is applied consistently by the staff. The pupils show respect for the teachers and speak courteously to visitors, often initiating conversations. Good daily routines are well established and movement around school is orderly. The pupils behave well in assembly. Behaviour in the playground has improved and reported incidents of poor behaviour have reduced considerably. Attendance has improved since the last visit and is now approaching the national average. There remains work to do in convincing some parents of the importance of regular attendance on attainment, as too many organise long weekends and holidays in term time.

The consultant headteacher is providing authoritative and influential leadership. The outcomes of regular monitoring continue to be followed up rigorously. The thorough analysis of test results and the pupils' progress is providing the basis for increased, appropriate levels of staff accountability. With well considered direction, and the provision of carefully targeted training and support, the consultant headteacher is enabling the staff to take on leadership responsibilities at all levels. Considerable strides have been made in the development of an efficient assessment system and the capacity of the co-ordinator to sustain this. The responsibilities of the senior teacher for teaching and learning are well matched to her strengths. The deputy headteacher is leading the development of subject management effectively; core subject managers are working in partnership with the co-ordinators of foundation subjects to build a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Through their subject audits, all subject managers are identifying development priorities and contributing to the school improvement plan. All staff are contributing to the review of the curriculum.

The governing body has successfully appointed a headteacher to take up post in September; her induction programme is underway. Governors continue to play a regular part in monitoring progress through attendance at the task group meetings. They are providing an increasing level of challenge to the school. The governing body has introduced a helpful induction policy which links new governors to an experienced "buddy"; two recently appointed governors are benefiting from this.

The LEA's support has been well focused on the school's priorities and well received by the teachers. An advanced skills teacher is working alongside the staff to improve the quality of teaching. Additional finance has been made available for a range of appropriate purposes, including the refurbishment of the ICT suite. Assistance in identifying priorities for the pupils who speak English as an additional language, has helped the school to improve the match of provision to need. Considerable support for the appointment of a substantive headteacher has been provided for the governing body.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: raise standards in English, mathematics, science, information and communications technology (ICT) and religious education

A thorough analysis of the outcomes of both the Key Stage 1 national tests and the optional tests for Years 3 to 5 has been conducted. This indicates that slightly fewer than half the pupils in Key Stage 2 are reaching the levels expected for their age; performance is weakest in Year 5. Areas where the pupils' learning is least secure have been identified for further work; this information is available for the teachers as they prepare for their new classes in the next academic year. The rate

of progress of every pupil over the year has been measured. Whilst progress is broadly satisfactory, it is not rapid enough to make good the deficits in the pupils' previous learning. Effective use is being made of the assessment information to identify those pupils in need of support and a series of suitable intervention programmes have been initiated. Helpfully, regular testing to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures is planned. Additionally, areas where the design of the curriculum is not promoting progress effectively have been highlighted. In response to this, a review of the curriculum which encompasses skills' development, progression, continuity and breadth is underway in readiness for next term.

Progress on actions likely to raise standards is reasonable.

2: improve the leadership, management and governance of the school

Comments on this area for improvement have been made above.

Progress is good.

3: improve the quality of teaching

The school has an effective system for monitoring teaching and rightly judges the overall quality to be satisfactory. Monitoring practices have become embedded in the regular professional practice of the school; a monitoring code of conduct is understood by all staff. Each teacher is monitored twice a term with an announced observation. Strengths and areas for development are identified and quality time planned for feedback to the teacher. Individual teachers have made progress when identified for targeted support from an LEA Advanced Skills Teacher, the LEA school improvement adviser and the headteacher. The core subject co-ordinators have been given the responsibility for monitoring their own subject area and this has had a positive impact on their own teaching. Joint planning between parallel classes is enabling teachers to share ideas and learn from each other. There are well considered plans to improve teaching further through peer observation; disseminating good practice; setting clearer success criteria in lesson planning; further challenging the more-able pupils; and increased monitoring of the foundation subjects. The staffing has become more stable and will shortly include no long-term supply staff.

Progress is reasonable.

4: ensure the needs of all the pupils are well met, including those who are learning English as an additional language (EAL)

With support from the LEA, the school has reviewed its provision for the pupils with English as an additional language and drawn up a draft policy. The establishment of the tracking system has enabled the attainment and progress of these pupils to be assessed and plotted against the relevant national profile. As a consequence, there is much greater clarity about the type and level of support suitable for the pupils and the deployment of the inclusion support team has been reviewed in response to this. Members are focusing on particular types of support and have attended relevant training, for example on the implementation of a structured language programme. Helpfully, briefings are planned to assist teachers in meeting the needs of the pupils who speak English as an additional language in whole-class teaching and there are sensible plans to include the relevant targets within medium-term planning.

Progress is reasonable.

5: improve pupils' behaviour

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall. Calm classroom environments allow the teachers to teach. The behaviour management process is thorough and effective. Incidents of poor behaviour in lessons are noted by staff; individual pupils with recurring problems are monitored in and out of lessons by the school inclusion team. Targets are set with the pupils, and the parents invited into the school to discuss specific behaviour concerns. There are sound plans to develop a nurture group to provide additional support for these pupils in proportion to need. In the playground, the introduction of activities such as skipping has captured the enthusiasm of boys and girls alike, and is helping to develop co-operative skills. Behaviour logs demonstrate that aggressive incidents such as fighting have practically disappeared. The reward systems are valued by pupils as a way in which positive behaviour is acknowledged, and 'Golden Time' at the end of the week is highly regarded.

Progress is good.