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17 July 2007

Ms A Bufton
The Headteacher
Anderton Park Primary School
Dennis Road
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Birmingham
West Midlands B12 8BL

Dear Ms Bufton

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Anderton Park Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Isherwood and Susan Walsh, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 10 and 11 July 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, one of the assistant headteachers, the subject leader for science, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the second monitoring visit, one teacher has left the school and three new teachers, including a new assistant headteacher, have taken up their appointments. Nine out of 34 teaching posts are currently filled by supply staff.

Achievement and standards

The school correctly judges that there has been satisfactory progress in raising standards and improving achievement. The school has put in place good assessment

arrangements since the last monitoring visit. These robust procedures and the sensible use of external monitoring have ensured that the data for all year groups is now reliable. School assessment data, progress seen in lessons, and work in pupils' books show that the majority of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. In Years 5 and 6 over half of the pupils have made better than expected progress since the last monitoring visit. These pupils are successfully narrowing the gap between what they have attained and what they are capable of.

In the remainder of the school progress is inconsistent. This is reflected in the school's data, work seen in books, and in lessons. Although many pupils make satisfactory or better progress, a significant minority of pupils are not making enough progress to catch up to where they should be. The gap between what pupils are capable of and what they are attaining is not closing quickly enough. Despite these improved levels of progress, standards attained by the majority of pupils are below those expected for their age. The exception is in Year 5 where most pupils have now reached the expected level.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- raise standards and improve achievement for all groups of pupils in English, mathematics and science, by raising teacher expectations of what pupils can do – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils show good standards of behaviour in lessons and as they move around school. They relate well to each other, particularly when collaborative activities are well focused and capture the pupils' interests. Occasionally, lessons are not as interesting and a minority of pupils go off task for short periods of time. Pupils take pride in their work and respond well to the rewards they earn. They enjoy the opportunities to share their successes with the headteacher, for example at her weekly tea parties.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has continued to improve since the last monitoring visit. The proportion of good teaching has increased but there is still not enough of this to fully address gaps in pupils' learning. Where teaching is most effective, pupils' progress has accelerated rapidly. Lessons are now well planned to make good use of the time available and most lessons move on at a brisk pace. Teachers and pupils are very clear about what is to be learnt in lessons but pupils occasionally waste too much time copying out learning objectives.

In most lessons teachers make effective use of a good range of strategies such as timed activities, the use of 'talk partners' and 'hot seating' to engage pupils in their learning. However, teachers' expectations about what pupils should achieve are not always high enough. For example, many pupils just sit passively when they are

asked to use 'talk partners' and their learning slows. As a result, the progress made by many pupils is not as rapid as it needs to be.

Teachers work well in year teams to plan lessons at different ability levels. However, insufficient attention is paid to the individual abilities of the pupils in each class to match work precisely to the wide ability range. Work is sometimes too difficult for lower attaining pupils and not challenging enough for the higher attaining pupils.

The support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is variable. There is good support for many of these pupils in withdrawal groups. However, planning for these pupils, both in class and in withdrawal groups, is not consistently good. Too little reference is made to the targets set in their individual education plans. As a result, too many of these pupils are not provided with suitable learning activities to enable them to make as much progress as they could.

Science planning has improved, providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills. As a result, pupils are more motivated and enjoy science more. However, there are still significant gaps in their learning.

There have been significant improvements to the quality of marking and pupils are now consistently given clear guidance about how to improve their work. Many pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6, respond very well to teachers' comments and this helps them to learn more quickly. However, too many comments are not followed up by pupils and teachers. Pupils are increasingly aware of their targets, which they are frequently reminded of in the better lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing engaging tasks appropriate for all year groups and improving the use of assessment data to move pupils on in their learning – satisfactory
- improve the care, guidance and support for all pupils by ensuring that they are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their learning – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The clear direction and high expectations of the highly regarded headteacher are the driving force behind the school's improvement. She has developed a good level of professionalism and a strong desire to improve throughout the committed staff team. The effective communication and the relentless focus on improving the learning opportunities for the pupils are key factors in raising morale and enabling the school to make progress. Induction procedures for new members of staff are very effective and have enabled them to contribute quickly to the school's development.

All aspects of the school's work are monitored and evaluated rigorously by senior and middle leaders. A sensible initiative has been to combine some of these activities with those of the LA. As a result, judgements have been moderated and both the

school and the LA have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Outcomes are reported openly and frankly and support is provided where it is needed. For example, significant improvements have recently been made in the Nursery and in mental mathematics throughout the school as a direct result of highly focused training and support.

The school has put in place a robust and detailed programme of assessments to monitor the progress made by each pupil. The resulting information is used effectively to highlight areas of underachievement and target support.

The quality of lesson observations remains an issue for the school. Although the format has been improved, the level of evaluation is still not high enough to provide teachers with sufficiently precise information to enable them to develop their teaching skills as quickly as they could.

The governing body is provided with a good level of information to enable it to fulfil its duty of holding the school to account. Meetings of the full governing body and an appropriate range of committees are well documented and demonstrate that governors are asking suitably challenging questions. The school has been successful in recruiting several new governors and suitable training has been put in place. However, the poor attendance at too many meetings is not helpful to the school's development.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve the leadership and management of the school by: ensuring that the headteacher and deputy headteacher establish a rigorous, strategic approach to help raise standards; improving teamwork throughout the school to raise morale; deploying support staff effectively and developing the role of the governing body to ensure that it receives sufficient information about pupils' underachievement – good.

External support

There is a very effective professional working relationship between the school and the LA. The headteacher continues to manage the support effectively for the benefit of the pupils. Advisory support has been well targeted, for example to address weaknesses in mathematics and in the Nursery. A particularly beneficial initiative has been to combine the LA's evaluative review with the professional development of the school's senior leaders.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

A third newly qualified teacher may be appointed on condition that he or she is mentored by a member of the senior leadership team and is not in the same year group as another newly qualified teacher.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Learning and Culture for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector