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06 March 2008

Mrs Linda Burgess
Langley Mill Junior School
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Dear Mrs Burgess

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LANGLEY MILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Following my visit with Anna Coyle and John Foster, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 5 and 6 March 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Derbyshire

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
H M Inspector Education, Learning and Skills

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF LANGLEY MILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 05 and 06 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, observed lessons, met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, a representative from the governing body and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring visit on 10 December 2007, the school has appointed a new permanent headteacher from January 2008. The rest of staffing remains the same, but further staffing changes are imminent with two teachers leaving at the end of this term. One permanent appointment has been made and the school will further utilise a teacher returning from long term absence to cover this. One of the senior leadership team has resumed class teaching responsibility to cover further staff absence and to provide continuity for Year 6. She is still able to fulfil her role as assessment co-ordinator and monitors pupils' progress across the school.

The school continues to receive extensive support from a number of LA advisors. The school retains links with an educational welfare officer who continues to work with a small number of families to improve pupils' attendance.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English, mathematics and science are still below average overall by Year 6, but beginning to rise steadily across the school. This is due to the increased use of assessment data and marking which is helping teachers to pinpoint weaknesses and adjust their teaching accordingly. Consequently, achievement is now mainly satisfactory and pupils are making better progress than previously. Speaking, listening and reading skills are satisfactory by Year 6 and are developing well, but writing continues to be an issue for the school to address in all year groups, particularly the poor standards of spelling which hinder pupils' progress significantly across the curriculum. Although teachers' expectations have risen to a reasonable level, they are still not high enough to help drive up standards even further. Handwriting is inconsistent in some classes, but improving because of the school's good focus on encouraging

pupils to present their work more neatly and this is having the desired impact in the upper year groups especially. Progress in numeracy, problem solving and scientific investigation is improving because pupils are now more involved in practical activities which aid their understanding and lead to better skills.

The school is successfully tackling underachievement through the careful monitoring of progress in all classes. Notably, girls are now doing as well as boys generally, and Year 3 girls are doing better than boys in reading. Lower attaining girls in Year 4 are benefiting from the numeracy booster classes. The good use of strategies to involve pupils in assessing their own work and that of their peers is working particularly well in Year 6. This means that pupils are learning to identify what they need to do to reach the next level. These opportunities are having a good impact and helping to increase progress and improve standards by raising pupils' aspirations of themselves.

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

- Raise standards, particularly for the girls, in reading, mathematics and science – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The previous monitoring visit identified progress in improving attendance as satisfactory. This has been maintained and attendance is now close to the national average. The percentage of unauthorised absence is, however, higher than that nationally. This is predominantly because of the poor attendance and persistent lateness of a few pupils. The school's systems for monitoring absence and lateness are thorough and this has had a positive effect on the overall attendance levels.

Pupils' behaviour is good overall, though on occasions a few individuals do not behave in an appropriate manner. Teachers and support staff work hard to minimise the effects of this inappropriate behaviour. The pupils say that they enjoy school, particularly when the lessons are fun. Pupils, particularly the older ones, know how well they are doing in their work and they say that they are given good guidance to make further progress in their learning.

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

- Take stringent measures to improve pupils' attendance – satisfactory

Quality of provision

There has been satisfactory progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last monitoring visit. During the current visit no inadequate teaching was seen and overall the quality remains satisfactory, but with a substantial number of good or better lessons. This matches the school's evaluation of teaching and learning. However, there is variance in the quality across the school. In Years 5 and 6 the quality is good overall with particular strengths in the expectations teachers have of pupils' performance and the ways in which lessons are planned for pupils to gain enjoyment in learning. In Years 3 and 4, the pace of lessons is often slower and pupils are not as involved in their learning, leading to satisfactory, rather than good progress.

Throughout the school, improvements have been made in the ways in which pupils work together in pairs and groups to help each other in their learning. They positively discuss aspects of their work and suggest to each other how it could be improved. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are good and this helps to create enjoyment in learning. Teachers use the interactive white boards well to support their teaching. This work is prepared well and helps the pupils to maintain concentration on their lessons.

Teachers' planning is variable across the school. The best quality planning identifies clearly what is to be learned in a lesson. Sometimes, however, the learning objectives are too vague and do not focus clearly enough on what pupils are to learn. Within their plans, some teachers ensure that work is adequately designed for pupils' differing abilities but this is not consistent across the school and, too often, similar work is set for all pupils.

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

- Improve teaching, the use of assessment, raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, and ensuring that teaching time meets the recommended requirements – satisfactory
- Develop the pupils' independent learning and involve them in their lessons – good

Leadership and management

Staffing has now been secured at a senior level, although there is to be some change of structure and some shifting of roles and responsibilities to more accurately address the needs of the school in the very near future. The leadership team are continuing to contribute reasonably well to the direction of the school. The school continues to prioritise effectively, still with a drive to improve teaching and learning and work towards improving standards and achievement. However, more progress has been made in this in the upper school and there remain some inconsistencies in practice overall. In the main, staff have responded positively to input from the LA and from the

professional development offered and are receptive to trying to improve their practice and secure improvement. The new headteacher has settled into her role extremely quickly and gained the respect of the staff team. Her management of structures and procedures, begun last term by the senior leadership team, has been maintained with an effective prioritisation of necessary action. The school continues to receive good commitment and support from all staff. However, subject coordination is stronger in some areas than others and this impacts on where there has been greater progress made. The school is working hard to ensure stability across the teaching staff and to minimise any necessary disruption to pupils.

The quality of teaching is reasonably stable since the last visit, although there is still a significant proportion of satisfactory teaching and not all good practice is yet sufficiently embedded. The school appears to have eradicated inadequate teaching. The leadership team and the LA have continued to monitor lessons and lesson planning, which is still having a positive impact. The school is aware of what it needs to address next to ensure greater consistency. Pupils learn independently in many lessons, which is beneficial to their enjoyment of lessons and to their progress, although they are still listening for too long in some.

The school now has plentiful data available as systems are in place and have been well maintained to regularly track pupils' progress. The school is now using this more effectively to provide pupils with appropriate targets, but are not yet using this information effectively enough through lesson planning consistently to ensure that pupils' needs are always accurately met. The impact of better assessment and collation of data is that staff continue to be better informed. The school continues to work hard at improving pupils' writing skills and on raising the achievement of lower attaining girls. Pupils' work has been moderated by staff and the LA. Further training has been undertaken by staff to moderate work and level work accurately, but they do not transfer this knowledge to adapt the lesson planning for their own class and provide sharp, appropriate learning objectives. Hence, there is more work to do on this. Advice given to pupils in the upper school enables them to more fully understand the level they are working towards or how to get there, but this is not happening as consistently in the lower school. More has been done to enable pupils to access information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.

The school has maintained the good progress in taking account of statutory requirements for health and safety and this is no longer an issue. It has sustained the progress in improving attendance and needs to continue to monitor this. The school has made satisfactory progress in the remaining areas for improvement identified at the initial inspection and satisfactory progress since the last monitoring visit because there has been only a relatively short space of time since the last visit and the new headteacher has only been in post for seven weeks. The impact of very recent changes is still to be realised and there is much that requires further embedding. Staff are mostly implementing the necessary actions, but the impact has been greater

in some areas than others. This has been effectively monitored by the school and the governors, and all are clearer about the progress made and the importance of evaluating the impact of any action taken. Consequently, some of the action taken has made a difference but consistency across subjects and year groups is still lacking. This has not yet had an impact on significantly raising standards and achievement or to ensure that all teaching is good, although this is bearing fruit in the upper school. Senior leaders realise the significance of their role in raising standards and modelling by example, but recognise that there is a need for more of this. School self evaluation is up-to-date.

The governing body is making steady progress in understanding its role and in more rigorously challenging the school and holding the school to account. It continues to receive further training and support from the LA and has sustained its strategic overview of the future direction and organisation of the school. Governor meetings continue to be significantly more focussed and the governing body are now well informed. It has begun to take a more proactive role in monitoring the school curriculum. There is now a thorough system of risk assessment carried out and the school continues to comply with recent safeguarding guidance. Further training on this is imminent.

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

- Improve the leadership and management so that there is an energetic drive for raising standards, rigorous monitoring of the provision and focussed strategic planning that tackles all weaknesses rapidly – satisfactory
- Ensure that the school takes account of all statutory requirements for health and safety – good

External support

The external support provided for the school by the LA has been sustained since the last monitoring visit and has been good. The LA works hard to continue to help the school to remain focussed on the key areas for improvement and the necessary action to achieve this. The LA recognises that consistency of the quality of teaching and learning and sustaining school leadership remain major priorities for improvement. The school continues to take part in the intensified support programme (ISP). It is encouraging that, because the level of support from the LA has been particularly extensive, the school is benefiting from the impact of this strategic support, although it has not yet had a significant impact on achievement and standards, and the school is not yet ready for support to be reduced.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities for further improvement remain as at the last monitoring visit, with the exceptions of priority 5, which may now be deleted. Priority 4 only requires maintaining rather than significant further development.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school at all levels, ensuring that priorities are more swiftly and effectively dealt with to bring about change.
- Raise achievement and standards by ensuring that assessment information is more effectively used to plan lessons which are accurately matched to the needs of learners and where expectations are consistently high.
- Ensure that the quality of lessons is consistently good and opportunities for independent learning are consistently applied across the school, with precise lesson objectives which are linked to National Curriculum criteria.
- Maintain the procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance.