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27 June 2008

Mrs Helen Dunnico  
The Acting Headteacher  
Yorkmead Junior and Infant School  
York Road  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B28 8BB

Dear Mrs Dunnico

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF YORKMEAD JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Following my visit with additional inspectors Paul Canham and Gail Robertson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 18 and 19 June 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF YORKMEAD JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 18 and 19 June 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work in Years 2, 4 and 6. They met with the acting headteacher, assistant headteachers, special educational needs coordinator and one of the National Leaders in Education (NLE) who is supporting the school. Inspectors also had discussions with a group of pupils, the vice chair of governors and the school's improvement partner.

### Context

The former headteacher resigned from his post at the end of February 2008. The deputy headteacher was appointed the acting headteacher as from 1 March 2008. She is supported by two NLE headteachers for two days each per week. One of the NLE leaders is currently on leave of absence. A Year 3 teacher left at Easter and a Year 4 teacher retired at the same time. The Year 3 class is being jointly taught by a permanent part time teacher and an assistant headteacher. The Year 4 class is being jointly taught by a regular supply teacher and an assistant headteacher. There is also a supply teacher in Year 2 covering a long term absence.

### Achievement and standards

Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are not high enough. Pupils' progress across the school is far too inconsistent in both subjects. Data shows that standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are predicted to be lower in 2008 than in 2007.

In 2007, there was a marked dip in standards at the end of Reception in all areas of learning. Progress has accelerated over the past two terms in both the Nursery and Reception classes (Foundation Stage) and attainment in both years has improved. Year 2 standards have been significantly below average for a number of years. Attainment in writing has been particularly low for the past two years. Current data shows that reading and mathematics standards remain significantly below average and writing standards have fallen further and are extremely low. Too few current pupils are reaching the expected or higher National Curriculum levels in reading or writing. While the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in mathematics has markedly increased, not enough pupils reach the expected level for their age. Data shows that pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is too variable. Whilst most Year 1 pupils are making generally satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics, around a quarter of readers and a third of mathematicians in Year 2 are not doing well enough. Staffing disruption in Year 2 has had an adverse impact on the continuity of pupils' learning.

Year 6 standards were significantly below average between 2003 and 2006. They rose to average in 2007. The trend in results has been upwards, but this has masked

significant underachievement elsewhere in the school. Current data shows that Year 6 standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. While standards are lower this year than last, it is important to note that the oldest pupils entered Year 3 with below average basic skills. Pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 is very inconsistent, both within subjects and between years. For example, in mathematics over 80% of Year 5 pupils have made the expected progress since September 2007, whereas in Year 4 only 37% have done so. Over the same period, only half of the Year 3 pupils have made the expected progress in reading, whereas in Years 1 and 4 over three quarters have done so. The percentage of pupils not making the expected progress in Years 1 to 6 is too high.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- raise standards in English and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 – inadequate.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be good. However, pupils' inconsistent progress in English and mathematics means that pupils are not properly prepared for the next step of their education. Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Good relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves, mean that learning is carried out in a very positive atmosphere.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is not improving at a fast enough rate. Provision is not having a sufficiently strong impact on effectively eliminating underachievement because teaching is too inconsistent. Teaching and learning range from outstanding to inadequate. There is too much satisfactory teaching and not enough good. Only a third of the lessons observed were judged good, with two thirds satisfactory. The school is falling well short of the local authority's (LA's) target for December 2008, which is to achieve 100% satisfactory or better and 70% good.

Improved lesson planning has ensured that all English and mathematics lessons have clear aims, success criteria and identified assessment opportunities. The information gained from teacher assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress is not being used well enough to match work to pupils' different starting points and abilities. This means that not all pupils are consistently challenged and too many do not make the progress of which they are capable. Expectations as to what pupils can achieve are not yet high enough. In the good or better lessons, the pace of learning is brisk, interesting resources and activities are used to capture pupils' imagination and motivate them to do well. For example, in a Foundation Stage lesson, children made exceptionally good progress because the nature of the reading activities were exciting and captivating and well matched to their needs. A Year 4 mathematics lesson was effective because the teacher had spotted the gaps in pupils' previous learning and was gearing teaching to eliminate them. Learning accelerated in some lessons because pupils were given opportunities to think hard, explain their ideas in groups, and present their work to the class. Such activity consolidates and extends

pupils' understanding of concepts and has a positive impact on their linguistic and social development.

In the satisfactory lessons, there are some common weaknesses. Teachers spend too much time on exposition, with pupils spending too much time sitting on the carpet listening rather than further developing their basic skills in independent or group work. On occasions when introductions are long, pupils become restless because the pace is slow, time is wasted, and learning is inhibited. On the rare occasions when teaching is inadequate, it is primarily because expectations as to what can be achieved are not high enough. A strength is the keenness of teachers to seek feedback in order to reflect on their practice and improve their skills.

The day to day assessment of what pupils can do remains too variable. In general, insufficient use is made of assessment information to plan work that is consistently challenging for all groups of pupils. The overall quality of teachers' marking is unsatisfactory.

The marking policy is inadequate because it does not provide teachers with sufficient guidance about how to mark and evaluate work. The acting headteacher is aware of the problem and there are plans to produce a new marking framework in the near future. Marking is not giving pupils a clear enough picture of what they do well and what they must do to improve. Poor presentation is too readily accepted and the work of the less able pupils is frequently left unfinished. Teachers sometimes praise work when it does not deserve it. Pupils have too few opportunities to evaluate their own performance and that of their peers.

English and mathematics targets are sometimes set but they are not often referred to in lessons, and pupils do not routinely refer to them when tackling work. Not all pupils know their targets and many were unclear what National Curriculum level they were working at and what they had to do to move to the next level. The basic skills of pupils with English as an additional language are now suitably assessed using a local authority framework. In the Foundation Stage, there is now clear and accurate assessment of what children have learnt and can do. Children's progress is checked termly against robust targets to ensure they are making sufficient progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- improve the quality and consistency of the teaching by raising the expectations of staff, by planning work that meets the needs of all abilities and by increasing the pace of lessons – inadequate
- improve marking and assessment, so that all pupils receive clear guidance on what it is they need to do to improve and ensure that the needs of higher attainers, those with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language are met – inadequate.

## Leadership and management

Since the inspection in January 2008, there has been a change of headteacher and the key areas for improvement have only begun to be addressed fairly recently. As a

result, there has been little sustainable and measurable improvement in the quality of education. The monitoring of provision by the acting headteacher and NLE leaders has been sound but it is not yet effective enough at assistant headteacher, middle manager and governor level. The evaluation of initiatives is not being done with sufficient rigour.

The acting headteacher has developed a good working relationship with the NLE leaders and their sound audit of provision has led to them gaining a secure understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. An appropriate strategic action plan has been produced that identifies the main priorities to be addressed and the methods used to bring about improvement. The plan points the school in the right direction. A start has been made on tackling key weaknesses in planning and the tracking of pupils' progress. Action has also been taken to remedy deficiencies in reading and mathematics resources and changes to the timing of the school day have resulted in learning becoming more coherent. A good feature has been the raising of staff expectations by observing good practice in NLE leaders schools.

The acting headteacher is providing determined and purposeful leadership. Staff welcome the greater opportunities provided to plan and share ideas together. They feel less isolated than they have in the past. However, the newly qualified teachers judge the quality of mentoring and support that they receive as inadequate and inspectors agree. Provision is too unstructured and newcomers do not have enough opportunities to see others teach, and this leads to a feeling of isolation. The acting headteacher's workload is too heavy and not enough responsibility is being devolved to other members of the senior management team, particularly the assistant headteachers, to ensure new systems are effectively evaluated and successfully embedded. The school is rightly in the process of restructuring the roles and responsibilities of assistant headteachers as the jobs they currently perform are not aligned closely enough to the school's key priorities. They do not have up to date job descriptions. The special educational needs coordinator has improved the quality of target setting for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this means work is now better focused on pupils' specific needs with positive results. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are temporary and their leadership roles are insufficiently developed.

Whilst a monitoring and evaluation schedule exists, it lacks clarity as to the focus of activities and how initiatives will be evaluated. Findings from monitoring have been shared with individuals but often not with the school as a whole. The senior leadership has a clear picture of individual teachers' strengths and weaknesses but they are not rigorous or systematic enough in remedying recurring weaknesses in teaching to improve its quality and raise standards. The good teaching that exists is not been shared widely enough.

Pupils' attainment and progress in all years are now being suitably tracked and information is being used to inform intervention and set relevant targets. Past whole school and end of year targets have been unrealistic and based on flawed data. Leaders know that past judgements made about attainment and progress have not been securely based on robust enough assessments of pupils' learning. The school has therefore lacked a proper baseline in each year from which to judge pupils'

progress. To improve things, teachers have begun to moderate standards in writing but the work is in its infancy and requires extension into other subjects. Leaders recognise the progress tracking system is not yet sufficiently refined to evaluate the progress made by different groups of pupils, apart from those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This hampers the quick pinpointing of underachievement and a speedy response. Nevertheless, data is now put to good use with leaders holding pupil progress meetings with teachers to call them to account for the standards achieved in their classes.

Governors have received recent training but it is too early to say what the impact of it is. A governor representative attends the termly monitoring and intervention group meetings where governors and LA representatives evaluate the school's progress on each area for development. Unfortunately, different governors have attended different meetings. This lack of continuity means no one governor has an overview of the progress made over time. Governors have drawn up a timetable of visits to encourage them to see the work of the school first hand. The foci for such visits are unclear and procedures for feeding back on what they have seen have not been established.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- improve the strategic leadership of the school and bring greater rigour to the way that leaders, managers and governors monitor and evaluate the work of the school and plan for improvement – inadequate.

#### External support

Following the January inspection, the LA produced a satisfactory statement of action indicating the actions it would take to support the school to bring about improvement. The LA has supplied the level of support it said it would although there has not yet been a thorough enough evaluation of the impact of initiatives on school outcomes. The NLE leaders have made a positive contribution supporting the acting headteacher and others and soundly auditing provision. Advanced skills teachers from the NLE leaders' schools have worked alongside teachers to improve planning and have provided training to increase the range of reading methods used. There are examples of increasing differentiation and appropriateness of expectations, but there is a way to go before all pupils are suitably stretched. The LA inspected the school in May 2008. Inspectors came to fair and accurate judgements about the progress made on each area for development.

#### Priorities for further improvement

There are no further priorities for improvement. The leadership must tackle the key areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008 and quicken the rate of progress made in each one.