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18 September 2008

Mr R Peden
Headteacher
Moston Fields Primary School
Brookside Road
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Manchester
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Dear Mr Peden

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Moston Fields Primary School

Following my visit with Angela Milner HMI and Marie Cordey Additional Inspector to your school on 16 and 17 September 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2007. 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 and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Her Majesty's Inspector
Special measures: monitoring of Moston Fields Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 September 2008

Evidence

Inspectors investigated the school's work by observing 24 lessons; scrutinising documents; holding meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, senior leaders, and groups of teachers, pupils, parents and governors. They also met with a representative from the local authority (LA) and the school improvement partner (SIP).

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the governors and LA have, after appropriate selection procedures, appointed the acting headteacher as the substantive headteacher. This has brought much needed stability to the school. Two new teachers, two new teaching assistants and a learning mentor have also been appointed. During the summer term the staffing difficulties described in the previous monitoring report continued. At the time of this inspection, there was greater stability in staffing.

Achievement and standards

Unvalidated Key Stage 2 test results in 2008 show that the proportion of pupils who attained the government's expectation of Level 4 in English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with the national average. As expected, the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in these subjects was below average. Nonetheless, these results represent better rates of progress for these pupils than experienced previously. At Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics declined. However, owing to uncertainty about the security of assessments in previous years, it is difficult to make year-on-year judgements about progress at this key stage. The school and LA agree that the 2008 Key Stage 1 assessments, and indeed those across the school, are now accurate and provide a good baseline from which to judge progress from September 2008. The school is acutely aware that, from these starting points, it must demonstrate at least satisfactory progress for pupils with the proportion making poor progress reducing rapidly.

Pupils' progress across the school, as demonstrated by their work, is patchy. A significant minority of pupils are still not making satisfactory progress. The school has correctly identified the need for booster classes for numeracy in the current Year 5 to rectify weaknesses. It has also identified writing as an issue and is aware of the need for urgent and effective action to raise standards. During the last school year, nearly two thirds of pupils in the current Years 4 to 6 made slow or poor progress in this area. Overall, the school has a number of measures in place to secure improvement but, as yet, they are not consistently applied or having a strong enough impact on raising standards.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 and in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1, and increase the rates of progress for all pupils – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are increasingly better equipped to play an active role in the life of the school. This is demonstrated by the school council's good participation in the recent appointments of teaching assistants and the headteacher, and in presentations to parents. Pupils are polite and the majority behave well. In lessons where they are not engaged a few are too chatty and this disrupts the flow of the lesson. Attendance levels are satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

At the time of the previous monitoring inspection nearly half the teaching observed was good. Now nearly 60% is good with a small proportion that is outstanding. In these good and better lessons, pupils are involved in their learning and take part in practical, creative activities. Teachers constantly reinforce previous learning and make good links with other areas of the curriculum. Pupils are clear about what they must achieve and are challenged to do their best. Teachers explain ideas well, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and teaching assistants are used effectively. Adults create positive learning environments where pupils share thoughtful ideas and listen to one another carefully. These features were particularly demonstrated in outstanding English and mathematics lessons observed in Years 5 and 6.

While the school is rightly pleased with the increased proportion of teaching that is good or better, it recognises there are inconsistencies and there is still too much that is just satisfactory. As a result, the improvements made have yet to have a sustained impact on pupils' work and rates of progress. Such inconsistency is most evident in guided reading, the quality of marking and the use of teaching assistants. Guided reading sessions are firmly established but lack sufficient rigour to improve overall reading skills. Sessions in which pupils are guided by adults are usually appropriately focused. However, this is not the case when pupils sit for 20 minutes reading silently. Where they are provided with independent tasks, these do not always provide enough challenge. Conversely, the linking letters and sounds programme is taught more consistently and, as a result, pupils' reading and writing skills have begun to improve this term. Day-to-day marking is beginning to help pupils make the next steps in their learning. This is most evident in Years 5 and 6 but is not consistent across the school. The school has increased the number of teaching assistants in order to accelerate rates of progress for pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the use of these additional adults is inconsistent. For example, some regularly mark pupils' work and share in lesson planning while others do not. Some lack involvement in assessing pupils' progress and observe rather than participate in the teaching of the class. School leaders recognise the need for a more consistent approach.

The school's drive to improve the tracking of pupils' progress has resulted in a more accurate evaluation of pupils' work and progress by the end of the last academic year. The improvements in curriculum planning have sharpened lesson activities matched to individuals, but this is not widespread. The best examples include rigorous identification and planning for individual needs. This tailored approach leads to improved rates of progress. Occasionally, teachers who are new to a class have insufficient information about their pupils' prior knowledge in order to plan more effectively.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school to increase the proportion of good and better teaching – satisfactory
- Improve teachers' knowledge and skills in assessing pupils and using this information to plan lessons better matched to pupils' abilities – satisfactory

Leadership and management

There is a strong commitment to improvement, driven by the headteacher's good leadership. The school is moving in the right direction. The senior leadership team continues to work hard to tackle areas for improvement. There have been successes, not least in increasing the proportion of teaching that is good or better. Instability in staffing arrangements, a most evident feature of last year, is being resolved. The headteacher and governors have not been afraid to make difficult decisions. The restructuring of classes has led to more targeted teaching for groups and individuals. The establishment of a secure baseline from which to measure pupils' progress has been an important and necessary step forward.

The role of subject leaders continues to develop well. They are bringing about improvements in subject teaching. They now monitor teachers' planning, observe lessons, and track and review pupils' work and progress. This increased level of monitoring is at an early stage. Leaders across the school know its impact must be seen in improved standards and rates of pupils' progress. Effective leadership has been put in place for science. As a result of the subject leader's determination, science is now taught as a discrete subject, there is a clear focus on developing scientific skills as well as knowledge and staff now demonstrate greater confidence in teaching science effectively.

Improvements in governance have been maintained and enhanced since the first monitoring inspection. The governing body shares the commitment to improvement. It is increasingly involved in the daily working of the school, for example linking to subjects and providing challenge and support for subject leaders. This is helping to develop their awareness and understanding of the issues to be addressed.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve governance so that governors are able to hold the school to account for the standards it achieves and the rates of pupils' progress – satisfactory
- Improve leadership and management at all levels so that the action taken is more effective and consistent in improving pupils' learning - satisfactory

External support

The support and challenge from the LA and the SIP have improved since the inspection that placed the school into special measures. They hold the school to account well. Good communication between the LA and SIP has avoided duplication of roles and ensured that the school has identified the correct priorities for improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the induction and support arrangements for the newly qualified teachers in post are fully in place.