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13 June 2008

Mrs C Stretton
The Interim Headteacher
Marriott Primary School
Marriott Road
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Dear Mrs Stretton

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MARRIOTT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Peter Isherwood, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 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 the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF MARRIOTT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 4 and 5 June 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the executive headteacher (EHT), interim headteacher (IHT), senior leadership team, representatives of the IEB and the standards inspector. Informal discussions were also held with other staff and pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection, the substantive headteacher has been absent from the school on long term sick leave. An EHT has been appointed for 2.5 days a week. In addition, a full time IHT was appointed by the IEB and local authority (LA) in April 2008 to lead and manage the school on a day to day basis. A class teacher has been absent since April 2008 and has subsequently resigned. The deputy headteacher is working with this class to stabilise the situation. In addition, the mathematics subject leader has been absent for a lengthy period. In May 2008, four members of staff resigned their posts. Consequently, the school faces severe staffing problems for September 2008. Ten support staff have been made redundant this term to help reduce the school's deficit budget and ease over staffing. This has had a detrimental impact on morale in the school.

Achievement and standards

Standards of attainment remain too low and pupils' achievement is inadequate. This is because too many pupils, including the more able, are not making the progress they are capable of. Teaching is having limited impact on the progress children make. Consequently, the gap between what pupils are attaining and what they are capable of is not closing quickly enough. There is still significant underachievement in English and mathematics throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 with many pupils working at standards below the level expected for their age. Scrutiny of books shows variability in the quality and quantity of recorded work. Throughout the school, the work of too many pupils is carelessly presented and is marred by inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation. This reflects low teacher expectations and a lack of pace and rigour in learning. Work in mathematics and science does not sufficiently challenge pupils or build on their prior learning. Too many are doing similar work, which limits their rates of progress. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in mathematics are particularly weak. Many pupils are not confident mathematicians, with many demonstrating weak calculation skills. Some concepts have not been covered in sufficient depth and there are many gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of aspects such as data handling and shape, space and measures.

The whole school focus on improving planning so that work is more accurately matched to pupils' individual needs has not yet had sufficient impact in improving the

progress pupils make. Although improved assessment data systems have been established, much of the data they currently contain is inaccurate. This prevents teachers from confidently using the information to help them plan lessons, target extra support for those pupils who need it including those with learning difficulties or developing a better understanding about the rate of progress pupils should make.

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

- raise standards, particularly in English, by assessing the individual needs of pupils and ensuring that they are met – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

The majority of pupils behave well and have positive attitudes. There is, however, a small minority who do not always pay attention in lessons and, at times, disrupt the learning of others. At break times younger pupils are well supervised and they respond well to the games provided for them. Many of the adults act as good role models by taking part in the games. However, a small number of older pupils exhibit unacceptable levels of behaviour on the playground and as they come into school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is not improving at a quick enough rate. Observations in classrooms and scrutiny of pupils' books show that in too many lessons pupils' progress is either inadequate or only just satisfactory. However, there is a small amount of good and occasionally outstanding teaching. In an outstanding Year 6 literacy lesson, the teacher really brought a story to life and pupils' eyes lit up with glee when pupils were given the chance to act as the main character. Good features of lessons include the use of information and communication technology to stimulate pupils' learning. In some classes, pupils benefit from good quality support from teaching assistants. Senior leaders are beginning to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, but this is at an early stage of development.

Lesson planning has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers use success criteria which are related to lesson objectives, but the criteria are often not in child friendly language and so not all pupils understand them. Teachers' use of questions to find out what pupils know and understand is too inconsistent. There are examples of good questioning techniques but at times teachers allow calling out which makes it difficult to check on pupils' knowledge effectively. The lack of secure knowledge of pupils' capabilities leads to work being set at the wrong level and, as a result, it is often either too easy or too hard. Some pupils' exercise books include targets but these are rarely referred to in marking and, as a result, serve little purpose. There are isolated examples of marking being used to develop learning, but these are too infrequent to have an impact on moving learning forward in the whole school. At times teachers are over generous in their comments and work which is obviously of poor quality is said to be good. Additionally, not all work is marked and, as a result, pupils do not know if they are being successful. The over use of worksheets and a lack of opportunities to carry out independent tasks limit pupils' development. In some classes there are insufficient resources to meet the needs of all the pupils. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson all pupils did not have access to the shared text

which was being studied. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are not always used effectively to develop learning. They are rushed and teachers do not always ensure they have the full attention of all their pupils. There is lack of punctuality following playtimes and in moving to sets. This means that many lessons do not get off to a prompt start which builds up over the week, leading to a considerable amount of lost teaching time.

Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that the curriculum for science and the foundation subjects such as art, history and geography is inadequate. There is too little coverage and insufficient depth. The over use of worksheets limits the opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the wider curriculum.

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

- improve the quality of teaching by developing rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation that pinpoints strengths and areas for improvement, so that best practice is disseminated and support is provided where provision is weaker – inadequate.

Leadership and management

Leadership at executive and interim headship level is strong. The EHT and IHT work well together and have established clearly designated and understood responsibilities. They are committed to developing the school and are tenacious in seeking improvement. Together, they have stabilised the school, which is now a calmer and generally more orderly place. Transparent and robust monitoring systems and processes are being introduced which now need to be fully embedded. It is imperative that continuity of support is maintained if the school is to benefit from this positive start. The EHT and IHT are well supported by the IEB which has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and its role in school improvement. The IEB has had to deal with a wide range of personnel, health and safety and financial issues since their formation. This has inevitably prevented them from achieving some of the targets identified in the raising attainment plan (RAP).

The RAP was constructed following suitable consultation and discussion. The identified priorities are appropriate, as are the strategies for achieving them, but progress has been hampered because of frequent staff absence. An accurate self-evaluation document was prepared prior to this monitoring visit and robust assessment systems have been introduced. However, leaders' concerns about the validity and accuracy of the data are preventing effective use.

There is still a long way to go to develop leadership capacity at all levels. The quality of leadership below headship level is at a preliminary stage of development and remains inadequate. Roles and responsibilities have yet to be fully clarified and many do not fully understand the concept of accountability. Until recently, most have not had the benefit of high quality training and support nor have they observed effective coaching in or modelling of good leadership and management skills. Both headteachers are proving good role models. This, coupled with increasing opportunities to work in collaboration with LA consultants and staff from a neighbouring school, is beginning to increase their understanding of what is required and expected of them. The senior management team needs strengthening. Recent

teacher resignations now provide leaders with an opportunity to establish a dynamic, supportive and committed team.

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

- strengthen leadership at all levels by clarifying roles and responsibilities and by developing accountability, robust management systems, rigorous self-evaluation and effective improvement planning – inadequate.

External support

The local authority's commitment to improvement was clearly evident prior to the inspection in January 2008 when a Warning Notice was issued and the governing body disbanded and replaced by the IEB. It has continued to respond swiftly to school improvement issues by appointing the executive and interim headteachers. Good support has been provided by the school improvement adviser, national strategy consultants, property services, human resources and the behaviour support team. This has helped sustain senior leaders' drive for change and improvement. However, in some issues, the LA has not been sufficiently proactive. It has been slow to respond in the recruitment of suitable teachers of high quality. In addition, the finance department have responded sluggishly to the school's request for an audit and in subsequently reporting its findings.

The local authority's statement of action is appropriate. It includes relevant judgements about the need for the school in the locality. It recognises the need to improve the quality of education rather than consider its closure and provide additional support for school leaders. The plan identifies appropriate support for the school in each area of improvement and action taken to improve the school to date is clearly identified. Regular monitoring and evaluation activities are planned throughout the period of support. Timescales and the financial implications are clearly identified.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure continuity of leadership at the senior level.
- Successfully appoint teachers of proven high quality before the start of the new academic year.
- Swiftly and effectively induct new staff into school and ensure that they fully and consistently implement all agreed policies.
- Ensure teacher assessments are accurate and the resultant data is used to target and track pupils appropriately and plan work effectively.