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8 November 2008

Mr M Wynne
The Headteacher
Yardley Wood Community Primary School
School Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B14 4ER

Dear Mr Wynne

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Yardley Wood Primary School

Following my visit with Eileen Chadwick, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 November 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 January 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

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. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Yardley Wood Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with senior staff, groups of pupils, a governor and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit the previous temporary deputy headteacher left the school at the end of last half term and another experienced deputy headteacher has been seconded to the school from the start of this half term.

Achievement and standards

Achievement remains inadequate because of the uneven progress pupils make across the school. Standards remain below average. Provisional results at Key Stage 2 in 2008 show similar outcomes to previous years.

There continues to be good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and in Year 6. Progress in Year 5 has improved and is now good and there are signs of an increased rate of improvement in Year 1. In other year groups the rate of improvement remains too slow.

Currently the school's own data, work in pupils' books, and lesson observations confirm this picture of uneven progress in English, mathematics and science. The progress of more able pupils remains inadequate. In contrast, the progress of lower attaining pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, continues to be satisfactory. An increasing number of pupils are coming into the school speaking English as an additional language. Sensible steps are being taken to ensure their progress is more carefully monitored. The school is now undertaking more interventions in response to any underachievement highlighted through the improved monitoring of pupils' progress. This is contributing to the higher numbers of pupils achieving levels commensurate with their age.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement: _

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and accelerate the progress of the average and above average attaining pupils – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well, are polite, and have positive attitudes largely as a result of the good relationships that exist between pupils and adults. Behaviour is particularly good in Years 5 and 6. Pupils appreciate the improvements made to security and

indicate that this makes them feel safe. Some inattentive behaviour was observed in one class and this was directly associated with weaknesses in teaching. Pupils are now having more opportunities to talk to each other about their ideas. This is particularly effective when pupils have the opportunity to discuss their responses to challenging questions posed by their teachers.

Quality of provision

Teaching has improved and more lessons are now good or outstanding. Teaching in the EYFS and Year 6 continues to be consistently good and sometimes outstanding. There have been marked improvements in teaching in Years 1 and 5. Improvements in Years 2, 3, and 4 are more limited. As a result, teaching in these year groups is mainly satisfactory, although some is inadequate. Consequently, progress is still too slow and underachievement has not been eliminated. The school is developing effective systems for tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The headteacher recognises there is some way to go before all teachers are able to use this information successfully to match work to the full range of pupils' abilities. In an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher's good knowledge of progression in the subject ensured adjustments were made to meet the full ability range. Pupils greatly enjoyed the challenging problem-solving nature of this lesson.

A revised format for lesson planning is contributing to further improvements in the use of learning objectives and success criteria. There is more evidence of teachers identifying outcomes at different levels but there is too much variability in how well this is used. The Year 5 teacher successfully taught 'time' in mathematics at a much lower level than is usual for this age group in order to redress deficiencies in earlier teaching. However, not all teachers identify gaps in pupils' understanding and adjust their planning to meet pupils' needs. In such circumstances the best use is not made of some very capable teaching assistants. Too many lessons fail to challenge consistently middle and higher attaining pupils. Inspectors observed pupils wasting too much time on mundane colouring-in and cut and stick activities.

The school has introduced new systems for teaching phonics and these are beginning to have a positive impact on improving reading and spelling in Year 1. However, in weaker literacy lessons, there is still not enough direct teaching of basic skills or links made between reading and writing. Guided reading sessions have been introduced, but too much is left to individual teachers in the way these are taught. The school acknowledges the need to step up the frequency of listening to pupils read in order to accelerate their progress as arrangements for hearing reading vary from class to class. The school has rightly identified the need to build better continuity in children's learning and assessment from Reception through to Year 1.

The quality of marking has improved and provides sound guidance to help pupils make better progress. Older pupils confirmed this was helping them to do better. However, pupils are not always given enough time to respond to teachers' marking. Pupils now have literacy and numeracy targets but can not always say what they need to do to improve. There are some good examples of pupils assessing their own

progress in Year 6 but the school recognises the need to promote pupils' involvement in self-assessment further in other year groups.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring teachers plan lessons which provide all pupils with sufficient challenge and activities that are well matched to their ability – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The majority of staff are becoming more effective as a result of changes instigated by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. More timely guidance is being made available as a result of improved frequency and rigour in monitoring and evaluation. However, some staff have struggled to respond to the outcomes of this. The new deputy is a good role model for other teachers and the school has quickly recognised how this expertise could help improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school has an accurate awareness of existing weaknesses and is taking steps to deal with these. For instance, weaknesses in teacher assessment in some year groups are being tackled through moderation activity with other schools and through restructuring to improve continuity across key stages. The school has recognised the need to ensure its use of quantifiable assessment information is developed further so that it is used effectively by all staff and is even more focused on achievement.

The quality of leadership in the EYFS is going from strength to strength. The very strong team have done remarkably well in actively involving parents and carers in their children's education. Further important improvements to accommodation have been made to ensure the greater safety of pupils. Safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements. Governors have a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and are better informed through reports that contain more useful indicators of improvement.

There are important weaknesses at middle leadership level because these leaders lack the skills needed to be sufficiently effective across all year groups. There is scope for even more regular monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work, to check that the learning needs of the full ability range are met. In addition, a lack of a concise curriculum overview inhibits monitoring.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management to bring greater rigour to monitoring the work of the school – satisfactory
- ensure all safeguarding procedures are fully met – good.

External support

Support from the local authority has had a satisfactory impact on the school. The school values the advice from its local authority adviser, particularly the ability to anticipate the support needed. The local authority evaluation of the school's

progress is a little generous and does not take sufficient account of all the available evidence. The support provided by local authority advanced skills teacher has had too little impact so far.

Progress on priorities for further improvement

- Ensure more effective use of success criteria and objectives in order that all pupils are consistently challenged.
- Further clarify the roles of staff in evaluating the work of the school and monitor more frequently in order that staff receive more timely guidance on how they can improve.

These additional priorities continue to remain areas for further improvement.