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27 November 2008

Mr Michael Wilson
Executive Headteacher
James Dixon Primary School
William Booth Road
Anerley
London
SE20 8BW

Dear Mr Wilson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of James Dixon Primary School

Following my visit with David White and Ann Sydney, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 19 and 20 November 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 May 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Director for Children's and Young People's Services for Bromley.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of James Dixon Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, examined a sample of pupils' books and met with the executive headteacher, senior staff, groups of pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection in May 2008, the number of classes has been reduced and now most age groups have one class per year with one mixed age class of Year 5 and 6. There are two Year 1 classes and from January there will be two Reception classes. Most of the children who attended the additionally resourced unit have been integrated into mainstream classes. One group of cross-phase provision is in place for a small group of children with the most complex needs. Apart from these changes, staffing has remained relatively stable.

Achievement and standards

Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's much improved data all indicate that pupils have made good progress since the last inspection, especially in English. There was a marked improvement in the 2008 national assessments and internal assessments show that attainment in all core subjects continues to improve, with more pupils achieving age-related expectations. This is the result of rigorous and well-used systems for tracking each pupil's progress, identifying individual pupil needs and instituting sharp and effective strategies to bring about improvement. The school is well aware that, although progress has improved, there is still more to be done to make sure that all pupils are achieving as well as they should. Regular and vigorous monitoring, including the involvement of all staff in pupil progress meetings, ensures that everyone is fully aware of what has been achieved, of targets for further improvement and of what needs to be done to achieve these targets. Whole-school weaknesses have been identified and dealt with. For example, a more purposeful approach to guided reading has resulted in accelerated progress in reading standards. This, in turn, is supporting better learning across other subjects.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science and make sure that all pupils do as well as they can – good

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved. More opportunities in lessons for discussion and active learning mean that they are keen to participate in discussion and are enthusiastic learners. Relationships between adults and pupils are good, as are those between pupils. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are responding

well to consistently applied, well-thought-out behaviour management systems. Behaviour is not so good out of class and in the playground, where pupils are sometimes rather boisterous and occasionally behave thoughtlessly towards others. The school recognises, and is taking steps to address, this next focus for improvement. There has been a marked improvement in both attendance and punctuality. This is due to the rigorous implementation of improved monitoring and tracking systems, the greater involvement of parents and also to improvements in the quality of education so that children are more eager to come to school. As a result of the improvements in behaviour management, the school has successfully reduced the number of temporary exclusions.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the attendance and punctuality of those pupils whose record is unsatisfactory – good

Quality of provision

Teaching staff have benefited from high quality coaching and mentoring provided by senior staff and local authority consultants. This has resulted in reflective and enthusiastic teachers who have a much stronger focus on, and greater understanding of, pupils' learning. They plan activities to meet the needs of different ability groups and make good use of cross-curricular links and real life to make learning more relevant and interesting.

Teaching and learning are generally better in literacy, which has been the main focus for improvement, than in other subjects. However, the expectation that pupils will use, and that staff will model, cursive script is not consistent. All teachers make the expectations for each lesson clear. They share the learning objectives with pupils and are beginning to identify the learning steps needed to achieve these objectives. Sometimes the objective outlines an activity rather than what the pupils will be learning, which makes it difficult for the teacher to assess the progress of different groups at the end of the lesson. This means that, although there has been good improvement in ensuring that activities are increasingly well matched to pupils' needs, sometimes the pitch of learning is not quite right with groups not given challenging enough work to move their learning on quickly. Examples were seen during the visit where teachers made good use of mini plenaries throughout lessons to refocus the pupils on achieving the learning objectives and to bring some urgency into the pace of the lessons. This good practice is not yet consistent across all classes. As a result of reorganization and training, teaching assistants are playing an increasingly valuable part in whole-class and small-group sessions. All pupils, particularly those with English as an additional language, benefit from greater opportunities for speaking and listening and well-organized classrooms where targets are clearly displayed and which are rich in vocabulary and pictures. Pupils know their targets and the quality of marking is good, in that teachers' comments often refer to the targets and give guidance about the next steps needed to achieve them.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve pupils' progress by ensuring that teachers make their expectations clear and provide challenging activities for pupils with different needs – good

Leadership and management

The previous inspection noted grounds for optimism due to the clear vision and early action taken by the new senior leadership team. This optimism was well placed. The executive headteacher has built a very strong team which works effectively and enthusiastically together with an unremitting focus on pupils' learning. The school improvement plan is sharply focused on outcomes for pupils; targets are ambitious but careful timings ensure that they are achievable. Improved and rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation systems involving leaders at all levels have been embedded so that the school now has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Action is taken immediately to address the areas requiring development. Senior leaders provide very good support through coaching and modelling good practice. This practical, day-to-day support has motivated staff and enabled the school to establish more consistent practices and higher expectations in both personal development and the quality of teaching and learning. This, in turn, has resulted in rapid improvement in pupils' academic attainment their attitudes and behaviour. Governors are now becoming informed and are therefore in a better position to fulfil their role as critical friend.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen the monitoring of both provision and pupils' performance by leaders at all levels to secure rapid improvements – good

External support

The local authority is providing good, well-focused support and its statement of action links well with and complements the school's action plan. Careful joint planning is making sure that external expertise is well used and is resulting in positive impact. Local authority consultants are working alongside subject leaders which is leading to improved capacity within the school to ensure its continuing improvement. The local authority is also providing good leadership and management support and is carrying out its monitoring and evaluation roles well. Liaison with the executive headteacher's other school is also providing important opportunities for staff development.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve teachers' understanding and use of learning objectives and success criteria so that learners are appropriately challenged in all lessons.
- Increase the use of strategies throughout lessons to refocus and sharpen the pace of learning.
- Develop greater consistency regarding the presentation of written work.