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14 November 2007

Mrs J Ngenda  
Acting Headteacher  
Blueberry Park Primary School  
Ackers Hall Avenue  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L14 2DY

Dear Mrs Ngenda

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BLUEBERRY PARK  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Lesley Traves and Ronald Bulman, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 12 and 13 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 June 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being made 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BLUEBERRY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 November 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior managers, a group of pupils, a member of the interim executive board (IEB), a representative of the local authority (LA) and the school's improvement partner (SIP).

### Context

The headteacher at the time of the last inspection has resigned. An interim headteacher from a neighbouring school was appointed until the appointment of the current acting headteacher in October 2008. The LA has used its powers to establish an IEB, following concerns regarding the capacity of the governing body to secure the necessary improvements and hold the school to account.

### Achievement and standards

Pupils' current work as well as provisional test results from 2008, suggest that some pupils are making slightly better progress than previously. However, standards at Year 2 and Year 6 remain well below average and pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. In addition, the progress made by higher attaining pupils in all core subjects is inadequate. This is because the quality of teaching and learning is too variable and the level of challenge in some lessons is too low. The understanding of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next is inconsistent in some classes. Consequently, teachers do not all have an accurate view of the progress made by different groups of learners and opportunities to plan activities for pupils of different abilities are not always taken. This results in too many pupils not achieving as well or as rapidly as they should.

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

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school - inadequate progress

### Personal development and well-being

In response to growing concerns about the challenging behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, a new behaviour policy has been recently introduced. As a result, staff have clearer guidelines to manage pupils' behaviour more consistently and for

the most part, pupils know where they stand. Pupils are more positive about their school. They are generally polite and say that many things have improved in recent weeks. Nevertheless, despite this improvement, behaviour is no better than satisfactory overall. This is because of the link between the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' behaviour in some lessons. When pupils are motivated by their work and the way it is presented to them, they respond very positively by giving their full attention and working hard. However, poor behaviour tends to result from lessons where activities are mundane and fail to challenge or inspire pupils to achieve. Attitudes to learning are much better when teachers make lessons interesting and enable pupils to be active learners.

### Quality of provision

There has been little improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching quality is too variable, with too much that is insufficiently challenging to raise pupils' achievement and little that is of really high quality. The lessons seen on this visit were mainly satisfactory and ranged from good to inadequate. In the best lessons, pupils enjoy and understand their learning. Activities are carefully planned; teachers are enthusiastic and use assessments well. In the less successful lessons, activities are too directed and there is insufficient response to the range of ability in classes and the different ways pupils learn. In the inadequate lessons, expectations were low; pupils were not inspired by the activities and, consequently, made little progress.

Teachers' planning is satisfactory, but is not precise enough to provide for pupils of all abilities. The provision for pupils who find learning difficult is variable due to inconsistencies in the planning of their work and in the teamwork of teachers and their assistants. The potential of higher attainers too often remains untapped, due to a lack of stimulation and challenge, or because they are left to their own devices.

Relationships between staff and pupils are generally positive. Where teaching is good and expectations are high, pupils behave cooperatively, learn independently and make progress. The time given to particular tasks is well measured, ensuring that pupils remain active and mutually supportive. Instances were seen of well illustrated explanations, and effective eliciting of suggestions as when pupils in Year 5 contributed to the teacher's skilled modelling of the Lancelot legend.

Pupils react less enthusiastically where teachers dominate the lesson, sometimes allowing insufficient time for thinking or discussion. When lessons progress too slowly or where explanations go on too long, pupils' interest wanes and restlessness ensues.

Teachers have continued to attend out-of-school training, but their exposure to excellent practice in their own or other schools has been limited. As a result, staff

are not all aware of what constitutes effective learning and good practice is not consistently shared.

The school's procedures for assessing pupils' progress are cumbersome and unwieldy. A great deal of information is generated about how well pupils are achieving in mathematics, reading and writing. However, this is not presented in a way that is easily accessible. It is difficult for staff to see at a glance, which pupils are doing well and which are lagging behind. Some staff are more experienced than others in accurately pinpointing the levels at which pupils are working and identifying the next precise steps for improvement. There is no consistent, school-wide agreement as to what constitutes each level of attainment. Consequently, assessment information is neither secure, nor accurate enough to enable teachers to set challenging targets for pupils or match work to their abilities. This has a detrimental effect on progress, particularly for the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties. There is little consistency in the way that staff undertake assessments and involve pupils in the target-setting process. Measures are currently underway to remedy these issues through staff training. Staff are beginning to use marking more effectively, not only to praise and encourage pupils for what they have done well, but also to help them to understand what they need to do to improve. There is some variability between classes. In the best examples, comments are incisive and pupils respond in writing, showing that they have taken these on board and understand what needs to be done.

The curriculum is showing some slight signs of improvement. These have been noted by the pupils, who talk enthusiastically about having increasing opportunities to take part in practical subjects such as art and physical education. They particularly enjoy lessons that engage them in 'doing things' and would like more of these. However, there is still much more to be done to ensure that the curriculum effectively and consistently meets the needs of all pupils. The provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities remains inadequate. The school does not yet have a robust and coherent plan of how the needs of these pupils are to be met, although a very recent start has been made to address this. The school has not accurately pinpointed the very small steps these pupils need to take in order to make appropriate progress. Similarly, the curriculum is not planned effectively to appropriately challenge the more able pupils to reach the levels of which they are capable. Consequently, in many classes, they mark time. A start has been made in improving the provision for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Better plans are in place to link learning outside to that in the classroom. However, resources are lacklustre and fail to fully engage and stimulate all pupils. Staff do not yet have the balance right as to when to purposefully direct children's outdoor learning and when to let them have free rein to explore for themselves. Consequently, children are not always fully engaged in learning and key opportunities are missed.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring greater but realistic challenge in lessons so that the proportion of good or better teaching increases substantially– inadequate progress
- Make better use of assessment information to plan lessons that precisely match pupils' needs and provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work–inadequate progress
- Ensure that the curriculum is planned effectively to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those in the resource provision and for those in the Foundation Stage, through outdoor activities—inadequate progress

## Leadership and management

A period of much change and disruption following the last inspection has severely limited the progress made by the school in tackling the areas for improvement. Senior leaders recognise that the pace of change has been too slow and as a result, the school is behind schedule. The recently appointed acting headteacher is leading the school well and in a matter of weeks has impressively gained the confidence and trust of the school community. She has an accurate view of the school's priorities and the reasons for its current deficiencies. With support from the LA and the IEB she is beginning to lay the foundations for improvements in teaching and learning and in raising pupils' achievement. However, much of her focus at present has been spent on stabilising the school, improving standards of pupils' behaviour and in creating an atmosphere conducive to learning. As a consequence, the school's action plan to tackle the key issues is only just beginning to emerge and there is no shared vision amongst staff of what needs to be done to bring about the necessary improvements.

The school is just beginning to move forward but is heavily dependent, at present, on the support of the LA and the IEB. Building the management capacity within the school has begun through the impact of training and support. The role of subject leaders is developing and there is clear agreement that now is the time for all staff to work together in the best interests of the pupils rather than continuing to operate as individuals. Staff report that communication has improved and there is greater acceptance of the collective responsibility for driving the work to raise standards. However, their roles and delegated responsibilities are not clearly defined which means that some staff remain unsure about what is expected of them. As a consequence, developing the skills of leaders and managers at all levels to monitor and evaluate provision remains a key priority.

Monitoring systems for teaching and learning are developing but as yet are insufficiently rigorous to affect a qualitative shift in all classroom practice. Data about pupils' achievement are available to all staff but have not yet made a significant difference to teachers' match of work to pupils' needs in all lessons.

All parties acknowledge that much remains to be done to get the school back on track and that leadership and management actions capable of making a substantial and sustained improvement on pupils' achievement have yet to be delivered.

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

- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, check rigorously on the quality of the school's work and take decisive action to improve it—inadequate progress

### External support

The LA is providing an appropriate level of guidance and has sought to support the school through the appointment of the acting headteacher and the IEB. The LA's statement of action matches the school's priorities and includes elements of both support and challenge in all areas for improvement. However, some of the actions have not achieved the intended impact against the agreed timescales.

The LA is committed to developing the skills of managers at all levels to enable them to monitor the quality of provision and use the outcomes of this to inform strategies for further improvement.

### Priorities for further improvement

As a matter of urgency:

- Implement an agreed action plan that identifies clearly the actions required to secure improvement and accelerate the pace of change.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff.
- Eliminate inadequate teaching and agree principles of good practice to share in improving pupils' learning.