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17 December 2008

Ms P Barnes
Headteacher
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Daubeney Road
Clapton
London
E5 0EG

Dear Ms Barnes

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Daubeney Primary School

Following my visit with David White and Stephen Parker, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 3 and 4 December 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 subject to special measures – 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the Trust Action Group and the Director of Children and Families for Hackney.

Yours sincerely

Usha Sahni OBE
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Daubeney Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 December 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of school, the executive headteacher, the chair of the outgoing governing body, the school improvement adviser from The Learning Trust, the School Improvement Partner, staff and pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection, 10 class teachers, half of the school's teaching complement last summer, and all but one of the senior leadership team have left. Eleven vacancies are currently covered mainly by overseas trained teachers employed from supply agencies; nine of these teachers are currently seeking qualified teacher status. As from 1 September 2008, a new head of school has been appointed. The school's partnership with Millfields Primary School, a neighbouring successful school, has been formalised and the headteacher from Millfields is employed as an executive headteacher at Daubeney for three days a week during this term. Following her resignation from Millfields, she is to become a 'consultant head' to this school for two days a week in the spring term.

The governing body has been dissolved and The Learning Trust has applied to establish an Interim Executive Board. A Trust Action Group consisting of the two heads of school and local authority officers currently oversees the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics continue to be exceptionally low across the school. The unvalidated results of the recent national tests for pupils in Years 2 and 6 were lower than in the previous year, continuing a falling trend, and the school did not meet its targets. Year 6 science results improved, however, reflecting an increase in opportunities for practical investigations that has lifted pupils' interest in the subject. Since September, the school has improved its procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. As a result, staff now have a more accurate picture of current standards and a reliable baseline for measuring future progress. This improvement is too recent, though, to have had a measurable impact on pupils' progress. The data show an unusually wide range of attainment in each class, growing wider through the school, with many pupils up to two years behind the expectation for their age. Pupils are now making good progress in an increasing number of lessons but there remain too many lessons where the progress of a significant proportion of pupils is inadequate. Many older pupils write too slowly because they have not learned a joined-up script and there is widespread underachievement in writing. Poorly established work habits mean that pupils do not

take enough responsibility for checking their work for accuracy, for instance in spelling, even when copying.

Results for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) remain significantly below both Hackney and national averages in major aspects of their development but, as was found in the last inspection, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress.

A phonics programme has been introduced to secure more consistent progress in the early stages of reading.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Although no key issues were identified for development in this area, important improvements have been achieved by the school in some aspects of pupils' personal development since the last inspection.

Pupils' attendance is now above the national average for primary schools. The head of school has led an extensive refurbishment programme, which has transformed the main school site into a pleasant environment and has raised staff and pupils' expectations of the school as a high quality place for learning. The children express a renewed sense of pride in their school and say that they enjoy coming to school because it is 'now a much better place that looks good, is fun but also gives us education'.

Behaviour of pupils is satisfactory and no pupils have been excluded this term.

The procedures for safeguarding learners meet the current government requirements.

Quality of provision

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving the proportions of good and satisfactory teaching, although a quarter of lessons remain inadequate. Quite appropriately, a strong emphasis is being placed on the continuing professional development of teaching and support staff. Monitoring of teaching and learning has accurately identified the key weaknesses underlying inadequate teaching and appropriate actions are in place to improve teachers' skills, although the impact on achievement and standards is not yet fully evident.

The senior leadership team has reviewed the school curriculum to ensure that all subjects are taught regularly; lesson planning is more systematic and includes opportunities for practical learning. The pupils express satisfaction with the provision

of a wider range of extra-curricular activities offered out of school hours. Teachers' planning and preparation time is deployed effectively to enable year teams to plan in year teams. An acting assistant head for curriculum supports and guides the teachers and monitors their short-term plans. However, because a significant proportion of teachers are just beginning to develop a competent knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and the national literacy and numeracy frameworks, they are unable to adapt their plans appropriately to meet the needs of all the pupils in their class. In setting out tasks, lesson plans assume three levels of ability; this leads to ineffective teaching as it does not reflect the unusually wide range of ability found in each class.

Although a core of good teaching and learning is now evident, too many inadequate lessons remain; these have a negative effect on progress in classes where pupils have already lost out due to a legacy of poor teaching over time in the school. This is generally where the teaching does not match the full range of pupils' needs, notably in mathematics where there is a serious lack of challenge for the most able pupils. The unsuccessful lessons are marked by a lack of assessment to inform the direction and pace of learning. As a result, pupils lose interest and their behaviour begins to deteriorate. In the best lessons, teachers ask challenging questions to probe and develop their pupils' understanding, expectations are high in terms of the demands placed upon pupils for the quality and quantity of work, and an engaging pace is maintained.

Teachers are beginning to use marking to help pupils to understand what needs to be improved, though the practice is embryonic and still far from consistent. Many teachers are not using the outcomes of the school's recent audit of individual pupils' achievement levels to inform the next stage of learning.

The school has been slow to ensure that effective interventions are put in place in the few instances where specific needs of pupils have been identified. Pupils' progress has been seriously set back because of a history of poor provision within the school, in particular a failure to provide for the individual needs of all its pupils. The class teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum attainment levels is not sufficiently embedded to enable them to match planning to the levels their pupils are at, what they know and can do. In addition, the diagnostic analysis of assessment data is not sharp enough to inform the specific factors underlying widespread underachievement among almost all the pupils in the school. The use of existing intervention strategies to support pupils' learning is unevenly spread across the school and is not firmly grounded in identified needs.

The senior leadership team has recently reviewed the support arrangements for pupils and has begun to bring about an order to the provision made by the school. Systems are being put in place to identify individual needs promptly. The recently completed assessment of pupils' achievement and standards is thorough and provides an accurate and reliable baseline to analyse individual learning needs and track future progress. The potential of this analysis is not yet being utilised by

teachers to hasten the pace of progress or to narrow the gap between where the pupils are and where they can be to meet their potential.

The senior teacher responsible for EYFS has made a good start on putting in place a system for assessing children's learning and development on entry to Nursery as a way of identifying individual needs and raising standards. Although this work is at an early stage, it has the potential to help the school to begin to break the cycle of persistently low standards historically attributed to low achievement on entry.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and achieve – satisfactory
- ensure that pupils' learning needs are identified promptly and that effective interventions are put in place to accelerate their progress – inadequate

Leadership and management

Since her appointment in September, the head of school and the executive headteacher have worked intensively in their different but complementary roles to put in place a number of appropriate structures and systems to take forward the planned actions for improvement. These provide a sound foundation for the school to make the urgently required improvements in a number of significant areas of its work.

Owing to vacant posts at almost all the senior leadership positions, the executive headteacher and the head of school are driving action in all the areas of development. Currently, this high number of vacancies for substantive posts at all levels of middle and senior leadership and management seriously hamper the school's internal capacity for improvement. In this context, a reliance on external support has provided an essential lever to make a start on a challenging agenda for improvement. Working in close partnership with The Learning Trust, the two heads have acted effectively and decisively to tackle some of the deep-seated competency issues by removing failing teachers. The school is aware that it faces a serious concern of securing a stable and an appropriately qualified workforce despite the successful recruitment of agency staff to the 11 class teacher vacancies since the beginning of this term.

The two heads have reviewed the school improvement plan which identifies the most important priorities for action in all key areas for improvement. The monitoring of the impact of actions taken so far lacks rigour because the success criteria and milestones are not clearly defined. A lack of synergy between the local authority statement of action and the school improvement plan further contributes to weak evaluation of the impact of the actions of the school and The Learning Trust towards the key expected outcomes, particularly in terms of pupils' progress and achievements.

Implementation of recently developed systems for the monitoring of achievement and standards and quality of teaching are beginning to inform leaders' interventions and strategies for improvement. Partnership teaching by the consultants appropriately focuses on the outcomes of lesson observations by senior staff and is helping to provide follow-up support to enhance individual teachers' knowledge and skills. A performance management system encompassing teachers' accountability for the progress their pupils make has just been put in place. However, the monitoring of the quality of teaching is not frequent enough and does not make explicit the expectation of all staff to bring about rapid improvement in their practice, particularly in the context of the extensive support currently available to them for professional development.

As part of its strategy to overcome the negative impact of the serious recruitment difficulties, the school has identified temporary cover for a tier of senior and middle leaders from among its existing teaching staff; this includes leadership of subjects and aspects. This group is well supported by a planned programme of professional development, which includes mentoring and coaching by the subject specialist consultants from The Learning Trust. By working alongside individual post-holders to audit, analyse, prioritise and plan action in their specific areas, these consultants are making an important contribution to enhancing the schools' limited leadership capacity. Carefully managed support and guidance for the recently appointed assistant headteachers for inclusion, and for curriculum and personal development, is enabling them to grow in their leadership roles and begin to focus on the key priorities in their areas of responsibility. The two heads are confident that the arrival of the recently appointed deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher in January 2009 will strengthen the leadership functions, particularly to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Effective action taken by the head of school and the executive headteacher has succeeded in creating a positive climate where pupils and staff alike want to learn and do well. Significant improvements are discernible in the pupils' attendance, motivation and enjoyment of school as a place for learning. Staff absence has seen a dramatic reduction this term, and there is clear evidence that the staff are signed up to a collective vision of a successful school and are working diligently to bring about the required improvements. The pupils appreciate that meetings and newsletters are helping to inform their parents about the events taking place in school and of their achievements, particularly their improved attendance and punctuality. A parent governor spoke about her sense of relief at the many positive signs of change at last and believes that a number of parents share her renewed confidence in the ability of the school to offer their children a better deal.

Although the governing body has been dissolved, the four parent governors are keen to be available for opportunities to contribute to the work of the Interim Executive Board.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring there is systematic and rigorous monitoring of standards and provision by leaders at all levels, and by the governing body – satisfactory

External support

The Learning Trust is providing extensive support to the school's leadership team on a range of development priorities. Intensive input by the primary advisory team has enabled the senior leaders to undertake the audit of standards and achievement. Partnership teaching and mentoring of a newly appointed tier of middle leaders by the consultants is enhancing the school's capacity to focus on specific weaknesses in teaching and learning. The human resources support provided by the Trust is of particular benefit to the school; not only has this accelerated the process of removing failing staff, it has also enabled the two heads to concentrate on the urgent improvements required in curriculum, teaching and learning.

The School Improvement Partner provides a robust challenge to the school and has supported the school in identifying appropriate priorities based on an analysis of the school's performance and entrenched problems.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that teachers develop a secure knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum standards in order to assess individual pupils' learning accurately and plan the next steps to secure their best progress.