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6 February 2009

Mr David Potts
Headteacher
Crab Lane Primary School
Crab Lane
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Dear Mr Potts

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Crab Lane Primary School

Following my visit with Bernard Campbell HMI to your school on 04 and 05 February 2009, 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 April 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 – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Manchester.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Crab Lane Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 04 and 05 February 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the school's senior and middle leadership teams, pupils, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring visit the governing body has been replaced with an IEB. The board took over responsibility for the strategic management of the school on 17 December 2008. They have had several meetings with the school leadership and with the LA. The school continues to experience significant instability to the staffing. A number of classes are taught by temporary or supply staff. Two full-time teaching staff left their posts with in January 2009 and a further two teachers are to leave in the near future. The school continues to receive significant external support from the LA including an associate deputy headteacher who works two days per week, three educational consultants in a training and monitoring role and from the school effectiveness officer. Additional management support is provided for the school's senior leadership from LA advisers and consultants.

Achievement and standards

Overall standards are rising but remain well below average in Key Stage 1 and 2. School data show that the progress pupils are making in writing is improving most, because of the school's focused work in this area. In the autumn term 2008 the vast majority of pupils made good progress in writing and in Year 6 the amount of progress was almost twice the expected rate. During the same period, pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 5 was inadequate; it was especially poor in Years 4 and 5. The school does not have data for pupils' progress in science. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work reveals that the progress pupils are making in science is inadequate. Targets set by the school for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of the current academic year are on track to be met in Years 2 and 6. If this is realised, standards will continue to be well below average.

Although there are encouraging trends of improvement in the progress pupils make in writing, in other subjects their progress is weak, and is often inconsistent across year groups.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and eradicate underachievement in all subjects – inadequate.

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching and learning is improving. Most lessons are satisfactory, some are good and there remains a small amount of inadequate provision. Improvement has been achieved due to the effective support of the LA consultants and the associate deputy headteacher. They have worked alongside school staff monitoring lessons and identifying weaknesses, and the school has responded well to provide training and development for staff. The curriculum has been extensively reviewed and redesigned and now provides more active learning opportunities with a better variety of tasks and practical activities. Pupils say that many lessons are more interesting as a result. Whole-school planning is in place for English and mathematics and ensures that most lessons are well structured.

Improvements to the quality of teaching are beginning to impact on the progress that some pupils make. However, one third of classes are taught by temporary or supply staff and are subject to further changes. This restricts the school's ability to build a consistent, regular and reliable teaching team to deliver good quality lessons. When this is combined with the still variable quality of lessons delivered by the school's permanent staff, the progress pupils make overall is inadequate. Where teaching is satisfactory or inadequate, the progress pupils make is insufficient to raise standards quickly enough. There are not enough good lessons to ensure that pupils make good progress in all subjects in all year groups.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and those responsible for English and mathematics have worked with the associate deputy headteacher to review and redesign the curriculum allocations and timetable. The outcome is to redress the previous imbalance of subjects and timings. In particular, more time is now given to science and the creative and physical subjects of the curriculum. This broader and better balanced diet of learning for pupils ensures a suitable emphasis on music, physical education, and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils commented on the increase in the range of practical work and say that they enjoy school much more than previously. The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improved in the Reception class, which now meets the statutory requirements. In the Nursery, however, the system for assessing children's needs and progress falls short of what is required.

Pupils are knowledgeable about their targets to improve in English and mathematics. Targets are set which describe new skills and knowledge to be learned and the levels of attainment that pupils should be aiming to achieve. A whole-school marking policy helps to ensure that pupils receive suitable feedback on their work and guidance about how to improve. Teaching assistants provide effective guidance to individual pupils and small groups. Whole-school targets are in place with the agreement of the LA for pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. The school monitors pupils' attainment and produces data to demonstrate this. The results are insufficiently evaluated to be able to target individual pupils, or groups of pupils, for extra support if needed in order to accelerate their progress.



Attainment is monitored, so that borderline pupils, for example, can receive booster support. This is not evaluated against pupils' prior attainment to measure progress and thereby not all pupils achieve well enough. The school has not monitored pupils' progress in science.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning – inadequate.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and effectively develops pupils' basic skills – satisfactory.
- Ensure that the quality of academic guidance is robust enough to ensure that all pupils know how well they are doing and how they need to improve – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The structure and deployment of senior management roles and responsibilities is imbalanced and ineffective. The assistant headteacher role carries too many responsibilities. The headteacher and deputy headteacher roles do not provide sufficient involvement to ensure the development of the school's provision. Due to the recent resignation of many of the school's middle leaders, there are vacancies to the management roles of significant subjects and aspects of the school's provision. The additional external support, including that from the associate deputy headteacher and the LA consultants, is adding important leadership capacity to improve the school. An extended leadership team, comprising subject leaders for English and mathematics together with senior staff, is improving the collective understanding of school improvement issues. The senior leadership's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses lacks sufficient rigour. Evaluations are too descriptive and do not clearly identify the next steps to be taken, or the way in which success is to be measured. The analysis of pupils' progress is inconsistent. While in writing it is precise and incisive, it is non-existent for science. The IEB is now in place and responsible for the strategic management of the school. The chair is very well informed and members of the board have quickly convened to begin the process of rapidly improving the school.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that the actions leaders take have a significant impact on improving the performance of the school – inadequate.

External support

Support for the school from the LA is good. The associate deputy headteacher continues to make a significant impact to improve the school's performance, notably in the curriculum developments. The consultants provide effective monitoring and staff training. Mentoring is in place for the headteacher and the school effectiveness officer makes regular visits to the school. The school improvement partner provides

a suitably sharp analysis of the school's performance, which helps the school's leadership to prioritise plans to raise standards and improve the school's provision.

Priorities for further improvement

- Review the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders, to ensure that clear direction is provided to improve the school's provision and to accelerate pupils' progress.