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Mrs J Ngenda
Headteacher
Blueberry Park Primary School
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Liverpool
L14 2DY

Dear Mrs Ngenda

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BLUEBERRY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Lesley Traves and Peter Jones, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 24 and 25 June 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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.
- Progress since previous monitoring visit- satisfactory.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

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
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BLUEBERRY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2009

Evidence

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

Context

The acting headteacher has been appointed as headteacher on a permanent basis. The three assistant headteacher positions will come to an end in September. The acting deputy headteacher from a neighbouring school will continue in post until the appointment of a permanent deputy headteacher. A number of staff will be leaving the school at the end of the summer term.

Achievement and standards

Since the previous visit, senior leaders have continued to take a range of appropriate steps to improve achievement and have done a great deal to lay the foundations for advances in the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils' current work together with the school's own data show that pupils in most year groups are beginning to catch up and close gaps in their learning. Provisional assessments this year indicate that an increasing number of pupils are reaching the levels expected of them and that their progress is beginning to accelerate. In Year 2, 84% of pupils in reading are on track to meet their individual targets at the end of the year. In Year 6, 93% of pupils in reading have made the expected levels of progress from the beginning of the year and some have exceeded this. This is because the school's initiatives to raise achievement are having a stronger influence on improving classroom practice and because improved teaching is increasing the progress pupils make in lessons. In addition, the school has strengthened the way it monitors pupils' progress and tracks their achievement, including those capable of working at a higher level and those that require additional support. Although not consistent in all classes, staff have a greater awareness of the standards attained by different groups, are more confident in planning lessons that cater for all pupils' needs and are increasingly aware of the progress pupils are making. Nevertheless, the progress pupils make in writing is not as rapid as it is in reading. Furthermore, while improving, standards reached by higher attaining pupils are not yet high enough. This is because the level of challenge in some lessons is variable. This results in some pupils not achieving as well or as rapidly as they should.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils have picked up the fact that more of their work is interesting and challenging. They give the thumbs up to lessons where they can investigate and test their skills in practical activities and can discuss and share their ideas with others. As a consequence, behaviour in the majority of lessons continues to improve because pupils are more active and engaged in their learning. They show positive attitudes to their work and are keen to succeed. As one child said, 'You have to work hard in lessons. Knowing the steps to success and your targets makes you go for it'. Another commented, 'Our headteacher has changed the rules: children are listening now'.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve and is increasing the progress pupils make in lessons. Approximately 50% of the teaching observed by inspectors during the visit was judged to be good or better. A number of common strengths were seen in the majority of lessons. Teachers make good use of resources and interactive technology to enhance visual demonstrations and support pupils' learning. Very good relationships exist between adults and pupils. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of extra support, particularly for those that find learning difficult. All staff use praise well to celebrate pupils' achievements, to encourage them to try their best and raise their self-esteem. In the very best lessons teachers have the confidence to stand back and let pupils make the learning their own with carefully crafted activities that promote high levels of discussion and independent thinking. Tasks are exciting, the pace of learning is brisk and pupils are given every opportunity to direct their work and share their ideas with others. For example, in an outstanding lesson in Year 5, pupils used their thinking skills to engage in lively discussion and perceptive analysis of a poem about a highwayman. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement as pupils made excellent progress in producing high quality examples of creative and imaginative writing.

Where teaching is inconsistent and less effective, too many worksheets are used, pupils' work is over-directed, activities are not always matched appropriately to pupils' needs and some of the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. As a result, learning becomes passive and pupils are less engaged and enthused by the tasks in hand.

Systems for monitoring pupils' progress have continued to improve, building on the foundation put into place at the time of the last monitoring visit. Staff are developing confidence in using the straightforward systems as a means of identifying those in their classes who need extra support or challenge. Elements of good practice are

emerging. Some staff have become adept at using assessment information with precision to plan future learning for groups and individuals, although this is not yet consistent across the school. Regular whole-school pupil progress meetings are instrumental in providing support and challenge for staff in using the information to drive improvement. Senior leaders have worked hard with support from the local authority to ensure that the new systems are robust and reliable. Staff training in this area has paid dividends. A recent check on the accuracy of teacher assessments has indicated that it is much improved. Although there is still a limited amount of pupil data to draw on, there is now enough for senior leaders to be able to check on improvements or gaps at whole-school level.

The systems for assessing the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and higher achieving pupils have significantly improved. Progress is regularly tracked, needs are clearly identified, support strategies outlined and future targets set. As yet, these are not always visible in teachers' lesson planning. The school has established a register of more able pupils, based on assessment data. This has made it easier for staff to check on their progress. Guidance has been given to staff to support them in providing appropriate challenges for these pupils, for example through work on 'thinking skills'. This work is in the early stages of development and the impact is yet to be seen. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good progress have been made in developing consistency among staff in the way assessments are carried out and used to plan the next learning steps.

Great strides have been made in improving the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have completely transformed both the Nursery and Reception classrooms. Consequently, the indoor environment is much better planned and resourced and now supports learning well. This has resulted in greater levels of independence for the children and greater enjoyment, for example as they listen to a story in the peaceful setting of the literacy room, or choose to paint in the creative area. The quality of outdoor provision has also improved, but there is still much more to be done here. The school has forged ahead on a programme of development work. Early Years Foundation Stage staff have improved their planning to ensure that opportunities for writing are woven through all activities, both indoors and outside. As a result, children are keen to write and show growing understanding of the link between reading and writing.

Throughout the school, the curriculum continues to show steady improvement, including for pupils in the Resource Base. Role-play opportunities have been extended to all classes and when used well have a positive impact on speaking, listening and writing skills. The school has rightly focused on improving pupils' skills in English, mathematics and science; this has inevitably led to less time being spent on other subjects. There are some pleasing examples of work in history and art on display around the school. There are also some good examples of subjects such as history, English, and design and technology being linked together to make learning more meaningful; for example, instructions for making a sandwich with wartime

rations. However this is not common practice in all classes. Pupils continue to enjoy their daily writing sessions, but there are too few opportunities for them to practise their writing skills in other subjects and, in some classes, an overuse of worksheets that, for example, demand one-word answers. This limits progress in writing, particularly for the more able pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically of the different visitors to school and how they have enjoyed working with poets, musicians and sportspeople. They soak up these experiences, which powerfully fire their imaginations and increase their love of learning. They report that they would like more visits out of school to enrich learning. The school has taken their views firmly on board and has plans in place to extend such opportunities in the new school year.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 – satisfactory.
- 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 – good.
- 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 – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher continue to have a significant impact on accelerating improvement and in orchestrating the school's steady recovery. As a consequence, leaders and managers at all levels are stepping up to the mark and there is a strong momentum for improving the school. Morale is good, expectations have been raised and staff are increasingly receptive to new ideas. As a group, they know the school well and closely monitor pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and potential areas for improvement.

Middle leadership has been strengthened. Staff are increasingly confident in monitoring and evaluating their subjects through checking pupils' work, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress. As a result, development planning is well targeted and actions taken are more decisive. Significant efforts have been made to develop the confidence of subject leaders, extend their responsibilities and enable them to lead more independently and show initiative. They now carry out observations of teaching and learning systematically and routinely scrutinise performance information. In raising their profile and developing their expertise, they are now confident in providing valuable feedback to teachers about how to improve.

The work of the IEB remains focused and supportive. Members continue to deepen their knowledge of the school's performance through scrutinising pupils' work and analysing data. They remain forthright in their desire to see the school improve



further and looking ahead, are making plans to recruit a skilled and fully trained governing body for the future.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- 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 – good.

External support

The local authority's support to the school continues to be effective and proportionate to the needs of the school. Overall, time given by local authority officers to assist the school has reduced as the school's capacity to manage its own improvement has increased. The local authority is committed to maintaining high levels of support for the school to tackle the remaining staffing issues that act as an obstacle to further progress. On going work through the intensifying support programme is proving effective because the school is making its own decisions as to when and where the support is required.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in different areas across the curriculum.
- Increase the challenge for the more able pupils, particularly in writing, so that they reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.