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11 March 2009

Ms Miranda Flack
Headteacher
Eastcote Primary School
Eastcote Road
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DA16 2ST

Dear Ms Flack

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Eastcote Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2007. 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 inspection – good

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 governors and the Director of Education for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Eastcote Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and the deputy director of the local authority (LA).

Context

The associate headteacher is now in school for at least four days a week and has been seconded to the school until the end of the academic year. A leading mathematics teacher has now joined the staff and is part of the senior leadership team with responsibility for assessment. Two additional teachers have been appointed to provide additional literacy and numeracy support for pupils at risk of not reaching the levels expected for their age. Following a period of staff changes in Year 3, more stability has now been secured with the appointment of a teacher until the end of the summer term. There have been no changes to the governing body since the previous monitoring visit in December.

Achievement and standards

The school has secured the accuracy of its assessment information since the last visit. Consultants from the LA have provided good support to help teachers moderate pupils' work and ensure that their assessments of the levels pupils are working at are reliable and robust. Staff have also developed their ability to accurately judge the level of pupils' work by working with another local school. Information on the progress that each pupil is making in English, mathematics and science is analysed regularly and used well to identify pupils who need additional support or specific programmes to make faster progress and reach expected levels. Lessons observed, work seen in pupils' books and the school's tracking information indicate that most pupils are now making progress at the expected rate. Some are making faster progress to catch up, following previous underachievement, including girls in Year 1 and 2 in writing. Some inconsistencies in progress remain, particularly in Year 3 in science and mathematics, where fewer pupils compared to other year groups have made the expected progress. To address this, the school is providing these pupils with high levels of additional support.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement in science and mathematics in Years 3–6 and writing in Years 1 and 2, particularly for girls – good

Personal development and well-being

Pupils say that 'lessons are more interactive' and they enjoy increasing opportunities to take part in practical activities. They particularly enjoy working together and the use of information and communication technology (ICT), noting that the interactive whiteboards are being used more in lessons. Pupils attend school regularly and have good relationships with staff; consequently, they behave well and are keen to take part in lessons. They know the levels that they are working on and their targets for improvement, which they say are referred to in lessons and reviewed regularly. They are able to explain how work is now varied for their different needs and talk knowledgably about the extra help that is given to those who need it. Most report that work is now more closely matched to their level of understanding and say, 'The school is changing and we are learning more.'

Quality of provision

Inadequate teaching has now been eradicated and there is greater consistency in the quality of lessons, with an increased proportion judged as good. This is having a positive impact on learning and helping to accelerate the progress that pupils make. Expectations of what should be seen in all lessons have been made explicit and are understood by staff. Features that are more consistently evident include ensuring that pupils understand what they will be learning and how their success will be measured. These success criteria and individual targets are used increasingly to guide pupils on what to do to improve. They are encouraged to assess their own understanding and indicate whether they need more guidance or support. Good opportunities for pupils to talk together and share their understanding are frequent. Different work is regularly planned for groups of pupils of varying abilities although inconsistency remains in the level of challenge some tasks provide. Teachers are using a variety of strategies in lessons, such as setting time targets on the interactive whiteboard to maintain a good pace. However, where lessons are less effective, the pace of learning is not sufficiently challenging for all pupils so their progress slows. The school has identified this as an area for further development. Teaching assistants are used more effectively in most lessons, including during whole-class activities. They contribute to teachers' planning and the assessment of pupils, and so have a clearer understanding of how their support is being used to improve learning. Training, for example on questioning and mathematics, has helped them to develop the skills and subject knowledge they need to be effective in the classroom and when working with groups of pupils.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of additional support and specific programmes has now been completed. Provision is monitored through observations, regular meetings with teaching assistants and the analysis of pupil-tracking information. Recently introduced initiatives are being monitored more frequently than others so that adjustments can be made if necessary. Programmes to support progress in English are having a positive impact. The school has identified that there are further opportunities to provide additional support programmes in mathematics and science.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching in Years 1–6, including by sharing good practice – good
- improve the use of assessment information to plan work that challenges all pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

Leaders have not been distracted from the task of securing more rapid improvement. There has been a sharper focus on embedding systems and evaluating the impact of actions on improving teaching and raising achievement. This has helped the school to make up the ground lost at the time of the last monitoring visit. Priorities identified by the inspection in September 2007 are now prominent in the school's more succinct action plan. There are appropriately challenging, quantifiable targets and more robust milestones to evaluate the progress being made and to sustain improvement. The associate headteacher and headteacher work well together and have raised expectations to secure greater consistency in provision. The impact leaders are having is evident in improved teaching and learning. However, some subject leaders are over-generous in their evaluations of lessons because they are not sufficiently focused on the quality of learning taking place. Individual development plans have been introduced for all staff to help them sharpen their skills and knowledge. Governors continue to support and challenge the school appropriately. They question any inconsistencies and the reliability of data, requiring the school to provide evidence of the progress it is making following monitoring visits.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- involve managers at all levels in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement – good

External support

The LA has been responsive to the needs of the school and acted quickly following the last monitoring visit to ensure that support is not over-burdensome or detracting from the school's main focus. School leaders now decide what support is needed and direct it closely to address identified issues. There have been fewer consultants working with the school but their activity has been more focused. As a result, the impact of their support has been good and is now enabling the school to build its own capacity to sustain improvement.