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The Executive Leadership Team  
Arthur Dye Primary School  
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Dear Executive Leadership Team

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Arthur Dye Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 and 31 March 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 June 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.

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 vice chair of the remaining governors and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Arthur Dye Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 30 and 31 March 2009

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work over two days, scrutinised documents and met the executive leadership team, five representatives from the local authority, a range of middle and senior managers from the school, groups of pupils, the vice chair of governors and one possible member of the proposed Interim Executive Board. A range of documents were scrutinised. Pupils were observed in lessons and around the school.

## Context

There have been substantial changes at the school since the first monitoring visit. The headteacher retired at the start of the February half term. An executive leadership team, comprising of three headteachers and a deputy headteacher, was commissioned by the local authority and took up its place four weeks ago. Nearly half of the teaching staff, mostly in Years 1 to 4, are on long term sick leave and their classes are being covered by temporary teachers. There have been changes in middle management. Five of the governing body have resigned and the local authority is awaiting the result of a request to the Secretary of State for the establishment of an Interim Executive Board.

## Achievement and standards

Results from the 2008 Year 6 tests show that pupils' attainment overall was significantly below the national average. Standards in science were exceptionally low. Predictions for the current Year 6 remain well below expected levels. Many of these pupils are working two levels below age related expectations because they have underachieved in the past. Whilst Year 6 are currently benefiting from good teaching and learning, the gaps in their knowledge and understanding are too great to fill over such a short period of time. Work in pupils' books reflects a picture of slow progress over time. In Years 3 and 4 there has been an over reliance on photocopied sheets to record work and this has stifled pupils' creative development in writing. Most of the teachers currently in place are working hard to make learning activities interesting so that it encourages the pupils to make progress. In one Year 3 lesson the pupils made good progress when they were encouraged to work together in groups to record the features of different story characters. The boys supported the girls in writing a description about Cyclops the one-eyed creature whilst the girls' imagination blossomed when the groups were required to write about a princess.

Results from the 2008 Year 2 tests at the end of Year 2 were broadly in line with the national average. However, the work that many of these pupils are doing in the current Year 3 does not reflect these average standards, highlighting the

inadequacies in teacher assessments over time. Work in pupils' books is evidence of the overall picture of slow progress over time with too many pupils failing to show real tangible gains in their knowledge and understanding.

Although children start school with standards in key skills that are much lower than age related expectations, they fail to make progress and attainment remains low during their foundation year. Whilst some satisfactory standards in letter sounds were observed, the children do not receive sufficient practice in using the knowledge they have gained when they write. Personal and social development declines over their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) and this results in children who are well below age related expectations for this area of learning.

Progress since the last visit:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, especially for boys – inadequate.

### Personal development and well-being

The executive leadership team has introduced a range of practical initiatives which have impacted well on attendance rates and these have made considerable improvements. Pupils are positive about the recent changes to their school and are all clear that behaviour has improved. The executive leadership team has set out much higher expectations of behaviour and initially there has been a higher rate of exclusions. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are very friendly and politely open doors for adults. Where teaching is improving fewer pupils become restless and disengaged from learning. During inadequate lessons pupils are often exceptionally patient and tolerant and quietly 'switch off' until something more interesting comes along, such as playtime. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) react to the poor quality of provision by either disengaging themselves from the situation and gazing into space or misbehaving in an unsafe manner. They are unexcited about their learning and, at times, appear depressed and saddened by the environment.

Even in the short time that the new executive leadership team has been in place there has been a greater understanding of safe practices. For example, pupils now know that it is not safe to run out of school when they are faced with a challenging situation. Pupils fully understanding the refreshed school vision 'EPIC' and they are all proudly working hard on a daily basis to put this Effort, Participation, Improvement and Celebration into all their learning activities. The greater emphasis on the use of the school house teams for the award of points has started to show an improvement in pupils' expectations of work and behaviour and is also helping them to play a greater part in their own school community.

### Quality of provision

Teaching continues to develop well in Year 6 and in one of the Year 5 classes where pupils are steadily making up lost learning time. Since the executive leadership team

has arrived, teaching has started to improve in Years 1 to 4. Expectations are rapidly rising and the pace of learning has gained momentum. There is a noticeable improvement in the way that pupils' work is now being set and suitably matched to individual needs. Many of the teachers observed during the monitoring visit had only been in class for a few days. However, lessons were well organised and pupils were motivated to succeed because they were enjoying their learning. There was a marked improvement in the way that pupils' learning was moving on because teachers were using questioning skills well to challenge and support the development of key skills. Good use was made of electronic teaching boards to make the focus of the lesson interesting and support learning in a more visual manner. This was particularly helpful to pupils in a Year 4 session where they could pictorially see what fractions looked like. Throughout the school there is an improvement in the use of teaching assistants to support pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This has started to have a positive influence on the pupils' involvement in the rest of the class, their self-esteem and the rate of progress pupils are making.

Since the last monitoring visit teaching has deteriorated in one of the Year 5 classes and pupils receive poor quality learning. Lessons move at an extremely slow pace and are not matched to the needs of the pupils. Effective use is not made of information and communication technology skills to help the pupils in their learning and the content of lessons are dull and uninspiring for these enthusiastic youngsters.

Inadequacies in the quality of teaching and curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) remain similar to the last monitoring visit. Although the indoor area reflects the children's own work, the learning environment is dull and unexciting. Poor use is made of the spacious area and the easy access to the safe and secure outdoor area is not deployed to best effect as an integral part of learning. There is no reflective approach to teaching and lessons are taught without enthusiasm or regard to what the children will gain from the sessions.

During the past four weeks, the executive leadership team has quickly ensured that the newly introduced assessment system is being used to collect data which can be used to monitor progress. The information gathered from this is now being used by the executive leadership team and the new middle managers to provide a strategic overview. Groups of pupils have been identified for additional support and await the rescheduling of teaching assistants for this to be implemented. The school has rightly introduced a new policy to rectify the inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking and clear guidance is now provided for teachers. In the best practice teachers are assessing pupil attainment and are giving advice to pupils on how to make the next step in their learning. In some cases, a meaningful dialogue between pupils and teachers is taking place.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that teachers match work accurately to the needs of all pupils in lessons, and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve – inadequate

- use assessment, marking and target setting more effectively to track pupils' progress, and provide pupils with better indications of the next steps in their learning – satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

The executive leadership team is highly experienced and works extremely closely together as the members focus on different aspects of improvement. In just over four weeks of being in place, they have swiftly identified the strengths of the school and those aspects that require improvement. The executive leadership team leads with conviction and honesty and has been unafraid to deal with some challenging staffing difficulties. This is crucial to the school's progress as it is ensuring that there is an acceptance amongst staff that the weaknesses identified by the previous inspection are accurate. The executive leadership team has recognised that there are ongoing weaknesses in teaching and learning and has taken decisive action to address these. The team has introduced a coherent and rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching staff have a clear understanding of the criteria on which they will be judged because it is shared and fully explained to them. These have already had a considerable impact in the improvements of the teaching and learning within the past four weeks in Years 1 to 4. The executive leadership team has quickly started to ensure that the information gained from teacher assessments is being used to inform future action plans.

The executive leadership team recognises much remains to be done. It is adamant that this is not a quick-fix and is fully aware of the need to change the culture of the school to ensure that all teaching staff firmly focus on learning. The team has recognised that the capacity of senior managers to move their teams forward is not strong and knows that this is a significant barrier to improvement in the quality of provision and standards. The executive leadership team is holding those senior managers who remain to account through a system of regular meetings. It has developed a new middle leadership team whose enthusiasm and willingness to make the necessary improvements to the school is refreshing and exciting.

Appropriate programmes of continuing professional development, supported and delivered by external consultants, have been established. Many staff are encouraged by this training and are eager to implement the ideas suggested at these regular workshop sessions. Already the impact of these initiatives is evident in some of the classrooms but it is too soon for them to be reflected in improving standards.

Given that at the time of the monitoring visit five of the governors, including the chair, had resigned and the local authority had applied for an Interim Executive Board and was awaiting a response from the Secretary of State, governance of the school is in a precarious position.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that the senior leaders rigorously evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and effectively implement measures to improve pupils' achievement – inadequate.

#### External support

The local authority has revised its statement of action in line with recommendations made by HMI at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. The formation of the executive leadership team who has introduced measurable and quantifiable targets for improvement has strengthened the local authority's capacity to monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness. The local authority project management group meets regularly to keep a watchful eye on the school's progress and monitor and evaluate the success of interventions. There is a high level of support and intervention from local authority officers and consultants. Nevertheless, until as recently as the past four weeks, the impact of the local authority's work in tackling the school's most pressing priorities, particularly to eliminate weaknesses in teaching and learning, has been limited.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, rectify the weaknesses in the quality of provision within the Early Years Foundation Stage and where teaching and learning in Year 5 are inadequate.