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Mr Nick Munns
Executive Headteacher
Monteagle Primary School
Burnham Road
Dagenham
RM9 4RB

Dear Mr Munns

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Monteagle Primary School

Following my visit with Pauline Berry and Michael Lafford, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

A maximum of two newly qualified teachers may 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 Corporate Director of Children's Services for Barking and Dagenham.

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Monteagle Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work and scrutinised documents such as the school improvement plan, teachers' planning, monitoring records and tracking data. They met with the executive headteacher, other staff in leadership positions, representatives of the school council, the School Improvement Partner and the chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). A total of 18 lessons were observed. Inspectors also visited the Early Years Foundation Stage and looked through samples of pupils' work.

Context

The executive headteacher has been in post for three months. Since the last monitoring visit, the assistant headteacher has been appointed as a second deputy. Two non-class-based teachers have returned to the classroom to replace two others who have left the school. Four long-term agency teachers remain on the staff. Delegated funding has been returned to the school which continues to be overseen by the IEB.

Achievement and standards

Children continue to get off to a good start at Monteagle. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a welcoming and stimulating learning environment helps them to become confident and eager learners. The strong emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills is particularly effective in helping children who are learning English to acquire the language they need to make sense of the world around them. A continuing emphasis on the skills of communication and high expectations in Years 1 and 2 ensure that pupils build well on these firm foundations and continue to make good progress. This has resulted in steadily rising standards at the end of Year 2.

School data indicate that pupils' overall attainment at the end of Year 6 is likely to improve again on the higher standards achieved in 2008. In particular, more pupils in the current Year 6 are working at the higher levels in English. They are working at similar levels in science and mathematics as last year. Most have made satisfactory or better progress during their years in Key Stage 2 in these subjects. However, this masks some unevenness in progress. Observations, examples of pupils' work and school data show that progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 is inadequate. Pupils in Year 3 are not building sufficiently on the above-average standards they reached at the end of Year 2, and in Year 4 too many pupils have made little or no progress since arriving in Key Stage 2. Pupils' progress in mathematics does accelerate markedly in Years 5 and 6 due to more challenging and focused teaching.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards, particularly at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour continue to be good. In lessons where the teaching is challenging and engaging, it is exemplary. In a few lessons, pupils become restless when they have been sitting for too long and when activities do not challenge them sufficiently. Pupils feel safe in the school and say that there is very little bullying. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good and there are high levels of racial harmony. Pupils feel that poor behaviour is confined to a few pupils who are dealt with well by staff. The executive headteacher has brought in new procedures for behaviour which are understood by all. While it is still too early to judge their impact, the rate of temporary exclusions is slowing down.

Quality of provision

Inspectors' observations of teaching indicate a broadly similar pattern to the last visit, but the proportion of good teaching has increased slightly. Around three out of five lessons seen were of good quality. Teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are consistently good and, in some cases, outstanding. In these classes, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and provide interesting activities which engage learners. The pace of learning is brisk and purposeful. In Key Stage 2, the picture remains more mixed, where, in recent years, there has been more discontinuity with a high turnover of teachers. While there are examples of strong teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6, there is an even distribution of good and satisfactory teaching throughout the juniors with a residue of inadequate lessons. This results in uneven progress for pupils. In mathematics, for example, some of the teaching, particularly in Year 6, challenges pupils of all abilities to develop their mathematical skills and to explain their strategies. Some of the teaching elsewhere, however, demands too little of pupils. In these lessons there remains an over-reliance on published materials and pupils spend too long on undemanding and repetitive tasks.

The school has not yet been able to address imbalances in the curriculum fully. In Key Stage 2, for example, the diet of many pupils in the mornings consists of two long sessions of English and mathematics and very little else. This means that other areas of the curriculum are neglected. It also makes it hard for teachers to maintain the pace and challenge of lessons, particularly in mathematics. The school has plans to address this as a matter of urgency.

The assessment coordinator continues to refine the school's tracking systems. These are now being used much more effectively by leaders and teachers at regular progress meetings to identify target groups. There are good examples of how this is being used in the curriculum, for example in guiding the setting arrangements in

mathematics in Year 6 and in organising literacy groups in Key Stage 1. There is not yet, however, a systematic programme of support mapped out for those who are falling behind, particularly in mathematics. The use of assessment information to help pupils to improve is variable. There are good examples of pupils assessing their own work but, in some classes in Key Stage 2, they have insufficient opportunities to develop this kind of independence in their learning. Marking is similarly mixed. There are some good examples of marking that make clear to pupils what they need to improve but this is not the case throughout the school.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge in lessons so that the different needs of all pupils are met – satisfactory
- use assessment and monitoring information to match support, guidance and the curriculum to the needs of all pupils – satisfactory
- ensure safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements – not inspected on this visit.

Leadership and management

The new executive headteacher has brought a new sense of purpose and direction to the school in a very short space of time. The roles of leaders at all levels have been clearly defined, so that their part in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement is made explicit. Systems have been simplified and clarified and staff and pupils know what is expected of them. The executive headteacher, with the effective support of his leadership team, has quickly established an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which is realistic and honest. Crucially, a new development plan has been established which is central to driving the rapid improvement needed in the weaker areas.

The performance management of teachers has been fully implemented and is being used to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. Newly qualified teachers feel much more supported and valued. Monitoring and evaluation are more purposeful and are related to the central priorities of the development plan. This term, for example, the emphasis has been on improving provision and progress in mathematics. Leaders at all levels are keen to develop their roles further and are helping teachers to improve their skills. There has not yet been sufficient time for this work to have completely eradicated underachievement or to ensure that all teaching is of good quality. The IEB continues to provide a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders and members are already formulating succession management plans in relation to the leadership of the school and the development of a new governing body. Its renewed sense of direction and the improvements already made in a short space of time indicate that the school now has good capacity for further improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen the rigour of monitoring and evaluation by leaders at all levels to secure rapid improvement – good

- implement performance management as a matter of urgency – good

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support for the school. The School Improvement Partner works closely with the school to help moderate judgements and to ensure that the support offered is proportionate and timely. Considerable support is offered through the London Challenge programme. The school is forging close links with its federated school, which is providing invaluable support, for example on attendance and assessment for learning.