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31 March 2009

Mr K McCabe
The Executive Headteacher
Jervoise Junior and Infant School
Jervoise Road
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Birmingham
West Midlands
B29 5QU

Dear Mr McCabe

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Jervoise Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 17 and 18 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 May 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 inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Jervoise Junior and Infant School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 March 2009

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, other school managers, parents, pupils, a representative of the local authority, and the chair of governors.

Context

A new Year 5 teacher started in January 2009, and a part-time Year 1 teacher has stepped into cover full time for an absent Year 1 teacher.

Achievement and standards

Work seen during this visit, in most classes, shows a significant improvement in the quantity of written activity by pupils, particularly so in Year 5 this calendar year. Since my previous visit, improving standards in English, mathematics and science in the work of all pupils are evident, although generally these remain lower than age-related expectations. The school has introduced a tracking system to monitor pupils' progress that shows evidence of satisfactory or better progress in most classes, based on teacher levelling of work. This process has revealed some previous weakness in the accuracy of teacher assessment. Recent science work has shown an improvement in standards because pupils have become more involved in lesson content. Pupils post their questions about what they would like to know about space, and statements that they think they already do know on a 'wonder wall'. It has generated real curiosity and enthusiasm, some very good display work, and some very challenging questions.

Class teachers are using 'level ladders' and 'I can' statements that are understood and used by pupils well. The assessment coordinator has compiled predictive charts based on Key Stage 1 prior attainment that assumes pupils should make two National Curriculum levels of progress from the end of Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2. This is clearly indicating whether each pupil is on track to match that rate of progress. In addition, and slightly confusingly, the local authority and the school are working at reaching age related 'expected levels', but by this they mean age-related expected levels by the end of Key Stage 2. This is ambitious, worth doing as an aspirational objective, but unrealistic in the shorter term given the legacy of underachievement. The school has not yet fully established the Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) methodology as a consistent way to detail pupil attainment at a subject-specific level. Key Stage 1 work has been formally moderated, and this needs to be repeated for the teacher assessment of the Key Stage 2 classes ready for the next monitoring visit.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils said they thought the school was much better than a year ago. They pointed to more trips and activities, drinking fountains, and lessons being 'more fun'. They all said they felt safe, that the school quickly sorted out rare cases of bullying, and dealt firmly and fairly with persistent bad behaviour. In-class behaviour seen on this visit was good, and while playtimes were a bit lively and boisterous, behaviour was still satisfactory. Parents also said they have noticed improvements in their child's enjoyment of school, better information about what is happening in school, and have more confidence in the school's leadership and management. They remain less happy about school dinners and that is also a concern of governors who are seeking funding to build an in-house kitchen.

Quality of provision

All the lessons seen on this visit were satisfactory, and the majority were good. In the good lessons, tasks matched the abilities of the pupils and pupils started the main tasks sooner rather than later, continuing to complete those tasks even if time was pressing. Teachers responded in a thoughtful and skilled way to feedback from pupils as the lesson progressed, trying a variety of additional strategies to match the emerging learning needs. In satisfactory lessons, the initial task was not so well geared to individual needs. Sometimes the legacy of weaker progress in the school showed as pupils turned out not to have the underpinning skills to complete the task. In one lesson, the teacher felt pressure to keep to the grand plan rather than let the pupils complete the original tasks, at which they were making good progress and enjoying the activity. Better lessons had teachers insisting on completing work quickly, with time-limited tasks and minimal whole-class discussion. Teachers did not just accept the first 'correct' answer but challenged pupils to explain their reasons.

Marking has improved so that in most books examined, teachers praise good work and give a straightforward comment on what needs to be done to improve the work further. In some cases, there is clear evidence of pupils responding to that advice in writing, but not in every case. Medium term planning is good, although it needs constant revision based on formative assessment of what the children actually manage to understand. At its best, this is leading to changed plans for the next lesson. This better teaching has not yet been in place long enough to make a significant impact on standards but in a short time the school and its pupils have come a long way.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it meets the needs of all pupils – good.

Leadership and management

By helping classroom staff concentrate on the fundamentals of good teaching, namely careful planning to match pupils' abilities, a good curriculum to meet their needs and interests, and good diagnostic assessment that involves pupils in making improvements, the school has managed to arrest the decline of standards, and started to see signs of improvement. This simplicity of approach should continue to make sure everyone is consistently delivering these good teaching aspects. Teaching staff have recognised a positive and substantial change in how they are supported. They note that professional conversations are now taking place in the staff room as teachers seek ideas and share their own thoughts on how to further improve. Middle managers have begun to observe colleagues teach and develop tracking and assessment routines to inform everyone about pupil progress. Although these are at an emergent stage and need further development and refinement. There is a sense that teachers can try out new ideas and seek help when they are stuck, in contrast to a previous culture of isolated classrooms.

Child protection procedures are in place and up to date in respect of staff training.

The governing body has advertised for a permanent headteacher and then plans to seek a deputy headteacher to replace the seconded headteacher and deputy from the local authority. Some details of short-term financial support for the school remain a concern for the governing body. A new 'strategy' group has begun to map a longer term vision for the school, but is hampered in this by uncertainty over future pupil numbers.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management at all levels in the school – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has maintained high levels of financial support including the financial burden of previous contractual commitments to the former headteacher and deputy. It is working closely with the school to ensure an effective transition from the seconded leadership team to a substantive one, and will resolve the present uncertainty over financial details. It conducts frequent onsite monitoring that has also recognised the improvement in teaching of late. Consultant advisers are having a helpful impact on improving classroom practice. School teaching staff now speak highly of the support they have received and of the opportunities to put theory learned from local authority courses into practice.