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Mrs Amanda Casey
Headteacher
Bewsey Lodge Primary School
Lodge Lane
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Dear Mrs Casey

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bewsey Lodge Primary School

Following my visit with Diane Auton, additional inspector, to your school on 6-7 October 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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 –good

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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Warrington.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite McCloy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Bewsey Lodge Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 6 – 7 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior leadership team, teachers and teaching assistants, groups of pupils and the school's improvement partner.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit in April 2009, two teachers have left the school and two teachers were appointed at the start of September.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been significantly below average over a four year period up to 2008. Year 2 assessments in 2009 showed that the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average, although very few pupils attained the higher level in any of these areas. Nevertheless, this improvement on previous performance reflects the positive impact of the school's actions to raise attainment. When taking into account pupils' generally low levels of skills, knowledge and understanding when entering the Nursery and Reception classes, most are now making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below average in 2007 and 2008. Early signs of the positive impact of the school's efforts to accelerate pupils' progress were seen, as predicted, in the 2009 test results in English and mathematics. The gap between these and the national average has narrowed a little, although very few pupils reached above average standards in either subject. The school recognises the significant challenge it faces in sustaining and extending the rate of improvement in Key Stage 2, due to the legacy of underachievement for many of these pupils, particularly in the current Year 5. Learning observed in lessons in Key Stage 2 was mainly good or better, although an isolated example of inadequate learning was also observed in one year group.

Relationships across the school are very positive and pupils enjoy their learning, responding well to teachers' raised expectations of their work and the infectious enthusiasm evident in many lessons. A common theme in pupils' discussions with inspectors was the opinion that 'our teachers make learning fun!' The school places an appropriate emphasis on ensuring that pupils have a good range of opportunities to develop and practise their spoken language and vocabulary skills. Pupils enjoy

regular 'talking partners' activities that help to improve their confidence in speaking and listening. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively by skilled teaching assistants and consequently make good progress in their learning and development. The school's analysis of pupils' achievement indicates that a lower number of girls are reaching higher than average levels of attainment comparative to boys. This is recognised as an area for whole-school development.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

r

- Raise standards and improve achievement throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 - satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

As reported in the first monitoring inspection, the positive disposition and attitudes to learning displayed by most pupils continue to make a good contribution to their achievement and progress. Pupils' behaviour is generally very good. When a small minority of pupils find it difficult to behave consistently well, most teachers and support staff handle this in a positive and constructive way so as to limit any negative impact on the quality of learning in lessons.

Procedures to monitor pupils' attendance continue to be applied rigorously to consolidate the good improvements reported in the previous visit. The school takes every possible opportunity to emphasise the importance of good attendance, which is currently in line with the national average, although it is too early in the school year to be confident that this will be sustained.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

i

- Improve attendance – good

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved further since the first monitoring inspection when satisfactory teaching was still predominant. An increasing proportion of good or outstanding teaching across the school was observed during this visit. This is having a corresponding effect on improving the learning and progress of the very large majority of pupils. The school is aware that in order to make up lost ground, particularly in some year groups, the quality of teaching needs to be consistently good or outstanding.

Teachers generally plan their lessons well to meet the learning needs of pupils across the ability range. This is supported by the whole-school planning format with

'interactive learning' prompts to ensure that attention is paid to developing pupils' communication, language and thinking skills. Warm and supportive relationships are evident in classes and around the school. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work and make good use of questioning skills to prompt pupils and extend their thinking. Skilled teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the teaching team and provide effective intervention and support during lessons and in small group sessions. This favourable adult to pupil ratio ensures that pupils can access additional guidance, helping to improve their confidence. It also enables the school to timetable regular 'targeted group work' activities to address class and individual learning priorities. These are planned according to need and the school's awareness of gaps in pupils' knowledge and basic skills. The wide range of intervention strategies makes a good contribution to the improving rate of learning and progress for all groups of pupils.

The use of assessment to support learning has developed and strengthened further since the previous monitoring visit. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because most teachers make this clear at the start of each lesson and regularly check pupils' progress towards their targets and learning outcomes. Teachers mark pupils' work well and give good guidance on what they can do to improve their work.

Where teaching is of the best quality, pupils are enthused and motivated to work hard and make excellent progress as the teacher provides a variety of interesting and thought-provoking activities. A good range of strategies are used to keep pupils focused and ensure that tasks are well matched to their differing abilities. The pupils consequently display a real sense of pride in their learning, are keen to contribute and rise to the challenges set. In a Year 3 English lesson, for example, pupils were starting to think imaginatively and offer lots of ideas of their own when considering how to improve their story writing skills. Very few lessons are now affected by weak teaching. When this does occur, learning is confused by the lack of purpose behind a planned activity, taking too little account of the needs of individual learners, or by a lack of skill in managing the potentially challenging behaviour of one or two pupils.

The curriculum is appropriately matched to pupils' needs, particularly when taking into account their below average skills in literacy and numeracy. The school is now looking towards making further adjustments to take into account, for example, the development of literacy skills through cross-curricular subject links. Some teachers are making good use of information communication technology (ICT) to enhance their lessons, although there are occasions when opportunities to do so are missed.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

e

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure work is appropriately matched to the needs of all pupils so their learning is at least good – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management have strengthened considerably since the last monitoring visit and the leadership team are less reliant on extensive support from the local authority. Some staffing issues being dealt with at that time have been resolved, allowing the headteacher's energies to be fully focused on moving the school forward with renewed confidence. Leaders have taken swift action recently as a result of difficulties identified in the Year 5 class arrangement, and changes have been made to this. As a group, the senior leadership team articulate high expectations of staff and pupils, setting a very good example themselves. In the leadership of teaching and learning, for example, they model good practice and monitor planning and teaching on a regular basis. School self-evaluation is linked well to its assessment, analysis and target setting processes. There is now a whole-school overview of this, as all teaching and support staff are kept informed and understand their own role in raising pupils' achievement. This reflects the improved sense of teamwork and consultation in the school, and is supported by effective communication through meetings and briefing notes. Senior leaders hold regular progress meetings with teachers to discuss their pupils' learning and check that targets are sufficiently challenging.

Some leadership responsibilities have been adjusted to suit the school's changing needs, for example, in the coordination of curriculum enhancement and community cohesion, for which good plans are in place. The inclusion coordinator is developing the skills to audit, plan and monitor the impact of school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes liaison with the leading practitioner in charge of the school's Development Centre, which is a local authority funded enhanced provision for Key Stage 1 pupils with additional learning and development needs. There are places for up to eight pupils, some of whom come from other mainstream schools across the borough. The local authority is aware of the need to quality assure this facility and check that it fully meets individual pupils' needs, enabling them to make good progress towards reintegration into mainstream classes where this is appropriate.

A meeting was held for parents following the monitoring visit in April, to inform them of the progress made so far and to invite any questions they may have had. Although this was not well attended, the school canvassed the views of parents in a questionnaire. This showed that the vast majority of parents and carers are fully supportive of the school and appreciate the level of care and support their children receive.

The work of the governing body was not a focus for this monitoring visit, as governors do now meet their statutory responsibilities. A governors' handbook has recently been collated to promote a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Ongoing training is made available by the local authority to enhance

governors' roles in monitoring the school's performance and evaluating the impact of its actions on improving achievement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, monitor, evaluate and take decisive action to secure improvement – good
- ensure governors meet all their statutory responsibilities – good

External support

The school receives regular support and monitoring reports from the local authority, including the school improvement partner, and this has had a positive impact on the developments in leadership and teaching, for example. The new inclusion coordinator has regular meetings with a special educational needs consultant. Through the authority's 'Improving Schools Programme', the placement of a teacher leader is helping to secure the stronger profile of teaching and learning. Visits by an executive headteacher provide the headteacher with opportunities to discuss development plans with another colleague who can offer views based on their own experience.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and improve achievement throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a higher proportion of lessons are good or better and the rate of pupils' progress is accelerated.
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, monitor, evaluate and take decisive action to secure improvement.
- The school should continue its work on the three priorities identified in the April 2009 monitoring inspection.