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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 June and 1 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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 – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications. The newly qualified teachers should be mentored by a teacher from one of the three partnership schools that work with Arthur Dye. All newly qualified teacher entitlements must be met in full. Appropriate internal and external development, support and induction must be provided.

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 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 third monitoring inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the executive leadership team, the senior leadership team, middle managers, the challenge and development adviser, the education welfare officer, the chair of the interim executive board and the local authority. Informal discussions were also held with other staff and pupils and recent parent surveys were scrutinised.

Context

Since the last visit there have been significant changes to the teaching staff. Following a planned management restructuring for the next academic year, the post for deputy head was advertised. No appointment was made but the school has secured a local authority advisory teacher to fill this vacancy on a seconded basis. An interim executive board has been established to replace the school's governing body. Following the last visit a minority of pupils left the school but more recently the number on roll has stabilised to around 300. The interim executive board are engaged in discussions with the local authority over the future leadership and management of the school.

Achievement and standards

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experience that are well below the expected levels. Until recently the children have made insufficient progress in all areas of learning during their time in Reception. However, the quality of provision has vastly improved and the children now make good progress. In sessions observed the children had made particularly high quality progress in personal, social and emotional development and in their writing skills. Standards at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are now in line with national averages.

Throughout the school standards of attainment are rising. Data from the 2009 Year 2 teacher assessments suggest that standards have declined from average to below average. These assessments reflect a more accurate picture than previous assessments had shown. However, the picture is more positive than this with standards of pupils' work in books improving at a fast rate. Most notable is the pupils' writing where links made across subjects and a high focus on teaching sounds and letter blends are resulting in improved outcomes.

Although as yet unvalidated, Year 6 test results accurately match teacher assessments. Despite a high mobility rate of over one third of the cohort, a significant proportion (one quarter) of pupils with learning difficulties and a small number who have English as an additional language, standards have improved in English and science. Boys outperformed girls in all tests except for writing where

there were no gender differences. Good teaching in Year 6 has increased the challenge for pupils and helped to plug the gaps in their skills and knowledge.

Analysis of data and scrutiny of books show a sustained improvement with the proportion of pupils working at age related levels rising. This reflects the positive impact of the many improvements to provision and shows that across the school most pupils are now making better progress in English, mathematics and science. There is clear evidence that pupils are producing a greater quantity of better quality work in all three subjects. Expectations of pupils' standards and achievement are clearly higher than previously.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

Personal development and well-being

Pupils have an energised approach to school life and have responded enthusiastically to the exciting initiatives introduced in the past few months. The daily whole school 'Wake and Shake' session encourages the pupils to reap the benefits of vigorous exercise and get off to a brisk start. Pupils enjoy their learning which they consider to be 'much more fun now'. The shortening of the lunch time break and the provision of play equipment have improved behaviour during this period. Introducing a house system has encouraged the pupils to work harder, behave better and make a greater contribution to their own school community. Aspirations are developing and pupils are ambitious to be teachers, rock climbers, bakers and hairdressers in the future.

Strategies to encourage pupils to attend regularly and to arrive at school punctually, such as reward cards and tokens to spend at the breakfast canteen, are having a positive impact on changing pupils' attitudes towards school. The robust action taken by the school in partnership with the education welfare officer, such as regular text messages to parents and home visits, has been very successful in reducing the number of pupils who have very low attendance rates.

Quality of provision

The weaknesses identified in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been rectified and provision is now good. The planned activities interest the children who are motivated in their learning and eager to achieve. In relation to their topic on 'The Three Little Pigs', excited youngsters were observed puzzling over how a wolf had got into their classroom overnight! The outdoor area was a hive of activity with houses being built from straw and sticks whilst the very enthusiastic teaching staff interacted very positively with groups of children. The inadequacies identified in Year 5 have been rectified and teaching and learning in this year group are now of consistently good quality. There is a good pace to lessons and effective use of

questioning ensures that all the pupils are fully involved. In fact, Year 5 pupils themselves recognise that they are doing much better than before.

The school's very regular monitoring of teaching shows that the overall quality has improved and is now good. Central to this is the commitment of all staff to improving the quality of learning across the school. This is reflected in the vibrant learning environments where a sensible balance has been struck between 'working walls' and celebrating pupils' achievements. Expectations of good quality work and positive behaviour are consistently high. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support the pupils in their learning and they make a good contribution to the progress made in class. Teachers employ a wide range of methods to capture pupils' interest and keep them engaged. These include talking partners and very effective use of interactive whiteboards. There is an improved focus on planning practical and exciting activities to motivate pupils. There is also a good balance between times for pupils to work in groups and times for them to watch and listen.

There is widespread use of a range of assessment techniques and the information gathered is used to inform both day-to-day teaching and interventions. Teachers use information about pupils' prior attainment effectively to provide challenge and support for all pupils. Pupils know their individual targets and what they need to do to improve. Teachers use the marking system consistently throughout the school and this means that all the pupils know that a 'brilliant blue' comment is well deserved praise and a 'purple pointer' helps them to move on in their learning.

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

Leadership and management

The executive leadership team has brought a clear sense of educational direction and purpose to the school's work. Morale has improved and a common sense of purpose is emerging. Teachers appreciate the improvements in communication and the greater transparency of decision making evident in the school's work. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are now much more firmly embedded and rigorous. The executive leadership team plays a central role in all monitoring activities and is steadily developing the involvement of senior and middle managers in this work. Consequently, the structure of the school's leadership and management continues to be strengthened in the drive to secure the school's capacity to improve.

The executive leadership team's high expectations have set the standard for the regular and rigorous monitoring that now occurs. The system is robust in identifying strengths and clear areas for improvement. The information gained from the intense

programme of monitoring performance has underpinned many of the improvements to provision. The team has used the expertise of colleagues in their own high performing schools to improve the quality of teaching and embed strong leadership and direction with senior and middle leaders at Arthur Dye.

The interim executive board are playing an important part in driving the school's improvement. It has implemented a suitable programme of activities, including focused visits to school and consultations with staff, pupils and parents, to monitor and evaluate the progress the school is making. A recent parent survey shows increasing confidence in the ability of managers to secure a good quality of education for their children. Although there have been concerns about the high number of different teachers their children have had, the majority feel that there has been vast improvements at the school in recent months.

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 – good.

External support

The local authority, notably the Head of Challenge and Development, and the Interim Executive Board work well together to broker the partnership between the three schools involved in the executive leadership team. This has had a positive impact on improving the quality of education. The Interim Executive Board works closely with the local authority to consult parents and staff about the changes. The Challenge and Development Adviser knows the school very well and provides accurate evaluation of the improvements made. Teachers from the three partnership schools support improvements and the local authority is committed to providing additional resources to strengthen provision and outcomes for all pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the new staffing structure secures stability and maintains the ongoing progress.
- Ensure that the executive team effectively transfers its leadership and management to secure the long term future of the school.