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13 July 2009

Ms Prue Barnes
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Ms Barnes

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Daubeney Primary School

Following my visit with David Hatchett, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 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

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 and Families for Hackney.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Daubeney Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 July 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of staff, groups of pupils, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), and a representative from the Learning Trust.

Context

There have been no major changes in the school's context since the last monitoring visit. A new headteacher has been appointed from January 2010 and six new teachers will be joining the school in September 2009.

Achievement and standards

Results from the summer 2009 national tests show that, while standards in Year 6 remain low, there has been good improvement since last year and the gap between attainment at the school and the national average is beginning to close. Nevertheless, a legacy of years of underachievement has resulted in pupils having a lot of ground to catch up. At Key Stage 2, unvalidated data indicate that 58% of pupils achieved Level 4 in both English and mathematics, compared to only 44% the year before. Improvement by the end of Key Stage 1 has been quicker to demonstrate impact. Good pupil progress in Year 2 was noted at the last monitoring visit. The result is that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are now broadly average, with pupils performing at national expectation in mathematics and close to average in reading and writing. Particularly pleasing for the school is that 9% of pupils achieved Level 3 in reading, 11% in writing and 11% in mathematics, compared to no pupils in any subject in 2008.

Newly introduced monitoring systems show that pupils are catching up with the national average through accelerated progress in lessons. Unsurprisingly, there is variability between classes, which is closely associated with the variation in the quality of learning.

The need to raise standards further and more quickly, so that pupils leave school with results that reflect their ability, is understood. Pupils have demonstrated that they are capable of more than had previously been expected. They thrive on learning. To improve this further, teachers need to ensure that the whole ability range is challenged.

Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage where the strengths reported on in earlier visits continue.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science – good

Personal development and well-being

There was no specific area for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2008 for this section. Nonetheless, there has been a marked improvement in attendance, with the figure of 97% for the current year representing an increase of 4% on 2008. Pupils on the school council spoke positively about school improvements and how they now trust teachers. They said that lessons are much more organised and behaviour is much improved. Inspectors noted good behaviour around the school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring visit. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better, and nearly two thirds were good. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. This represents good progress, although too many lessons remain just satisfactory. Teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly good and is now having a demonstrable impact on standards by the time children enter Year 1.

The best lessons are characterised by high expectations, with teaching that is lively and motivational, and skilful use of effective questioning to target and challenge pupils. For example, in one good history lesson observed, pupils were introduced to the concept of empathising with children being evacuated during the Second World War. The teacher used the interactive white board and sound effects to very good effect to enthuse and excite the pupils to talk and think about how children would have felt. As a result, they made good progress in both history and their speaking and listening skills. In less effective lessons, there was a reliance on worksheets to deliver the main activity, or on tasks which were not sufficiently differentiated, which resulted in more limited progress.

Although rates of progress are accelerating, there is still a legacy of low, and sometimes very low, standards of work in pupils' books, reflecting inadequate teaching in the past. Current satisfactory teaching is not enough to help pupils close the gap from their current levels of achievement. Planning is satisfactory overall, and usually identifies clear learning objectives and teaching sequences. The role of learning support staff is sometimes unclear, particularly during whole-class teacher-led introductions, where they are not always having an impact on learning. There is a trend to allocate learning support staff to groups of less able pupils, which results in inequitable access to the teacher for some pupils during main activities.

The revised marking policy has resulted in many teachers providing much more detailed and developmental feedback to pupils, most notably in identifying the next steps for learning. Nonetheless, in some classes marking is much more perfunctory or over-congratulatory, and therefore the implementation of the policy is variable.



Pupils say that they find written feedback helpful, but not all pupils currently know what their individual targets are for English and mathematics.

The school now has systems in place to assess and track pupils' achievement and standards, and these are beginning to be used to check rates of progress made by pupils and groups across the school. A result of this is that some interventions are in place to support those in danger of falling behind in their learning. Record keeping for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is very effective at tracking their progress prior to Key Stage 1.

Nevertheless, in some respects, the pace of improvement has not been rapid enough; for example, the school has only just started to introduce a new system for teachers and other school staff to identify vulnerable pupils who may potentially have specific learning needs or difficulties. The senior leader responsible for inclusion, who is leading on this is working enthusiastically to develop more effective processes to deal with the management of this area and the volume of concerns that have been generated. She has established good working relationships with external agencies, including the Learning Trust's educational psychologist. The full impact of this work has yet to be realised.

There are still some shortcomings with the deployment of learning support staff to individual pupils, groups and classes. There has yet to be an in-depth evaluation of the current allocation of learning support staff to pupils, and whether this is in the best interests of all pupils and achieves value for money. The school has plans to evaluate this aspect of provision next term.

Some targeted support for individual pupils is beginning to result in good gains in learning, for example, a Year 4 mathematics activity on perimeter was designed for pupils who found learning difficult. However, this is inconsistent across the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities now have individual education plans (IEPs) in place, as a result of initiatives and training conducted by the inclusion leadership. But there has yet to be a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of any interventions identified for these pupils in their IEPs. Lesson planning is not always informed by relevant pupil targets from their IEPs. While pupils learning English as an additional language are making satisfactory or better progress in lessons, they are not yet systematically assessed and tracked in relation to their English-language acquisition.

Teachers' planning generally identifies teaching and learning strategies and tasks for different groups of pupils, although this is not always evident in lessons. Although children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress as a result of input from additional adults during lessons, those who find learning easy do not always reach the higher national curriculum levels because planning and teaching do not always challenge them sufficiently.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and achieve – good
- ensure that pupils' learning needs are identified promptly and that effective interventions are put in place to accelerate their progress – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to set a clear direction for the school's improvement and enables senior leaders to develop in their roles. She has set clear expectations within the school and has engaged with parents. Feedback from parents is positive and participation in parents' evenings and parental contact has been greatly increased.

The Learning Trust has recognised the school's improved capacity by gradually reducing the level of consultancy and support. The headteacher, consultant headteacher and deputy head, along with the chair of the IEB, meet with the Learning Trust to monitor the school's progress. Together, they took a highly successful approach to teacher recruitment for September. The campaign was featured on regional television and, as a result, six experienced teachers have been recruited from a large pool of applicants. Consequently, the school will be fully staffed by qualified teachers.

Middle leaders have developed in their role since the last visit. They now monitor planning and the quality of marking in books. This has resulted in greater consistency in provision. School and external monitoring rightly identify the key strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, and there has been rigour in following up shortcomings. Nevertheless, internal monitoring of planning and books has not picked up some inconsistencies.

There has been good emphasis on continuing professional development. Middle leaders have begun to lead training in their own areas of responsibility. All teachers have had opportunities to see good practice through peer observation. Overseas-trained teachers have successfully acquired English qualified-teacher status by demonstrating the required standards. Learning assistants have received training in basic skills. As one middle leader observed, 'We're all learners.'

The systematic and rigorous monitoring, and the use of data, are spreading through the school, but there remain some inconsistencies in expectations. The school has been quick to address this issue raised in previous monitoring letters.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring there is systematic and rigorous monitoring of standards and provision by leaders at all levels and by the governing body – good

External support

The Learning Trust continues to maintain an appropriate level of support for the school by allocating regular visits from the Education and Improvement Adviser, the consultant headteacher and other consultants who work alongside teachers in lessons. There is a clear acknowledgement by all concerned of the improved leadership context and the increased capacity of the school. There has been external support in moderating pupil assessments to add validity to the judgements regarding pupil progress.

The IEB is now firmly established and is beginning the work of involving parents in the creation of a new governing body.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve still further the proportion of good teaching to accelerate pupil progress.
- Use assessment and the improved data more systematically to identify learning needs and to provide greater challenge for all pupils, including the more able.