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15 May 2009

Ms Sian Davies
Executive Principal
Grazebrook Primary School
Lordship Road
Stoke Newington
London
N16 0QP

Dear Ms Davies

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Grazebrook Primary School

Following my visit with Michael Lafford, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 May 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 March 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 the interim executive board and the Executive Director of Standards and School Effectiveness for Hackney.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Grazebrook Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 May 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work over two days; scrutinised documents; and met the executive principal, a range of middle and senior managers, pupils from the school council, a group of parents, as well as having informal discussions with parents, the chair of the interim executive board and representatives from the local authority. Pupils were observed at break-times and generally around the school.

Context

A member of staff has left the school since the last monitoring inspection. At the time of the visit, two teaching posts were being covered by long-term supply teachers. The interim executive board has appointed a substantive headteacher for September 2009.

Achievement and standards

Inspection and school evidence indicate that standards in Key Stage 1 are now broadly average. In Key Stage 2 there is a rising trend which is the result of significantly improved performance in mathematics. Since the last monitoring visit in February 2009, the school has implemented a range of strategies to raise achievement. These measures are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make. The school's leadership has correctly identified writing as an area for concern and has made this an urgent focus for development. In the lessons observed, teachers had clearly taken on board the new initiatives. The most significant improvement is that they have higher expectations of pupils, particularly in their acquisition and use of vocabulary. Pupils are finding the lessons more interesting and they enjoy the activities. The more focused teaching is starting to have a positive impact on progress. As a result of improved training in levelling pupils work, it has become clear that the attainment of some pupils in literacy had been incorrectly judged and their recent progress understated. The school has thoroughly monitored the provision in science and teachers are now far better placed to raise achievement. Additionally, rigorous assessment systems have been introduced which have identified areas of learning that have not yet been covered.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in mathematics and science by making better use of assessment data to monitor how well pupils are doing and by setting high expectations – good

Personal development and well-being

Relationships between pupils and staff in the school are strong. Pupils are friendly, confident and articulate and speak happily about the recent improvements in the school, to which they have contributed. They are proud to represent their class on the school council and feel their views are heard, for example in selecting playground equipment and in improving the school environment. Consequently, by Year 6, pupils are lively, thoughtful, responsible and sensitive young people.

Quality of provision

There is a steadily growing proportion of good lessons. The focus is now firmly on how to promote learning through independent thinking and practical activities that engage and motivate pupils. As a result, teachers spend less time talking while pupils sit passively. Teachers have improved displays in classrooms so that they are now calm and industrious places to work, language-rich, well organised and have high-quality work on display which pupils can use as prompts to help them. As a result, pupils' over-reliance on teachers is gradually decreasing. Importantly, teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and a clearer picture of their previous attainment in the core subjects. This enables them to plan tasks that match pupils' differing levels of attainment. Some teachers' marking is of high quality and shows pupils clearly how they could do better next time but this is not yet consistent in every class.

Although standards in Year 6 remain below average generally, there is a clear trend of improvement. The school is aware that there is still some way to go before every pupil is making consistently good progress throughout the school, but teachers are gradually eradicating the legacy of underachievement that was caused by weak teaching in the past. The introduction of more frequent and rigorous checks on pupils' progress by both teachers and senior leaders ensures that early signs of underachievement are dealt with promptly. These new systems incorporate challenging targets for pupil to achieve during the course of a year. Academic guidance is steadily improving but recent initiatives have not yet become fully embedded in everyday practice. For example, some pupils know and use their learning targets, while others are unclear about them.

The school has made good progress in ensuring that appropriate risk assessments have been carried out and action taken to make the areas of the school safe. This area for improvement has now been addressed.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure appropriate risk assessments are carried out and action taken to make all areas of the school safe – good

Leadership and management

The executive principal has successfully increased the momentum of school improvement by creating a strong leadership team and capitalising on their considerable expertise to drive developments in key areas. Senior leaders have readily taken on the challenge of tackling the root causes of underachievement. They have continued to meet with teachers each term to review each pupil's progress and discuss the way forward which has contributed to improved rates of progress. New leadership in English and science is driving improvements at a fast pace. This includes teachers now following a whole-school literacy plan, which includes a focus on writing. Frequent lesson observations and careful scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work highlight key areas for improvement which inform strategic planning. Similarly, in science the new subject leader has drawn up a detailed and focused action plan and is scrutinising assessment data to identify gaps in learning. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is ensuring continuing high standards of provision.

The school improvement plan has been revised in consultation with staff. It correctly identifies the key areas for attention, including the need to raise standards in writing and science. The education improvement adviser has been instrumental in reviewing and improving the provision for pupils with additional needs. A helpful booklet for parents about special educational needs and provision within the school has been produced and made available to all parents via the school website. The fluency levels of pupils who speak English as an additional language have been circulated to staff to ensure that they take this into account in their teaching.

The interim executive board has successfully recruited a permanent headteacher who will take up post in September 2009. They are productively involved in monitoring the impact of the school's actions through liaison with senior managers and subject leaders. Closer links with parents ensure that the majority see the school in a positive light.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure leaders and managers at all levels take decisive action to secure improvements in standards – good

External support

The local authority is now providing good support at both a strategic and an operational level. Good quality input from local authority consultants is having a positive impact on improving key aspects of the school's provision. This is judiciously delivered to take account of improvements made and to address remaining areas of weakness. Regular meetings provide a helpful review of the school's progress and identify emerging issues. This is contributing to building good capacity for continuing improvement.