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Mrs Catherine Stretton
The Headteacher
Marriott Primary School
Marriott Road
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Leicestershire
LE2 6NS

Dear Mrs Stretton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Marriott Primary School

Following my visit with Hazel Callaghan to your school on 16 and 17 June 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 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 be appointed subject to the following conditions. The school must involve the local authority in the appointment process. The newly qualified teachers should be mentored in school by a teacher of proven high quality. 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 Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Marriott Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior leadership team, representatives of the interim executive board and the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the School Improvement Partner. Informal discussions were also held with other staff and pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the executive headteacher no longer works directly with the school but retains a monitoring role on the interim executive board. A highly experienced governor has been recruited to the interim executive board. The number on roll has stabilised at around 235.

Achievement and standards

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experiences that are well below the expected levels. Children, particularly boys, make insufficient progress in their reading, writing and personal, social and emotional development because provision is not always matched sufficiently to their needs. Consequently, children enter Year 1 working well below expectations in these areas.

Standards of attainment are rising from Year 1 onwards. The 2009 end of Key Stage 1 unvalidated teacher assessment results show that although standards are below average, they are much improved in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards remain exceptionally low at the end of Key Stage 2. Here, teacher assessments show standards to be higher in mathematics, but outcomes in English are similar to those of the previous year. This picture is confirmed in books where standards are below those expected for their age. Throughout the school, girls achieve significantly better than boys in all subjects. Inspection findings, end of key stage outcomes and the school's own assessment data confirm that significant numbers of pupils are underachieving in writing. For example, by Year 5, analysis shows too many pupils are not performing as well as they should be. There has been insufficient time for strategies, such as 'Talk to Write', to impact fully on standards and redress the legacy of past underachievement or remedy the significant weaknesses in pupils' writing skills.

Analysis of data and scrutiny of books show sustained improvement in most classes. However, pockets of slow progress remain such as in writing and mathematics in Year 2. In Key Stage 1, although achievement is satisfactory in most lessons, it is not consistently good. The gains made by pupils need to be brisker if the gap

between what pupils are attaining and what they are capable of is to close further. In Key Stage 2, good teaching successfully builds on prior learning, increases in challenge, and is beginning to plug the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. Where learning is more active, pupils of all abilities make better progress. A comprehensive range of targeted intervention strategies, such as letters and sounds and additional guided reading sessions, have helped to accelerate rates of pupil progress. Detailed evaluations generally show a positive impact, particularly where older pupils' learning has been boosted and in the support provided for those with learning difficulties.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards, particularly in English, by assessing the individual needs of pupils and ensuring that they are met – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

The poor attendance of many pupils is still an issue of concern and adversely affects the progress of many pupils. Strategies to encourage pupils to attend regularly and to arrive at school punctually, such as the 'Cool Cat' promotion, are having a positive impact on changing pupils' attitudes. The breakfast club is also a great success in encouraging pupils to get to school early. It provides a calm start to the day and is significantly helping many pupils get ready for their lessons. Attendance remains below the national average, but parental attitudes are also beginning to change under the consistent and strong response to pupils' unexplained absence by the interim headteacher and staff. The school works closely with the education welfare officer and is ensuring that parents understand that pupils are expected at school and the consequences of their continued and regular unexplained absence.

Pupils' behaviour in school is satisfactory, as it was at the previous visit. Much improved systems for managing pupils' inappropriate behaviour are consistently applied and pupils now have clear understanding of the consequences of their actions. In lessons, pupils usually behave well especially when lessons are interesting or they feel challenged. However, concentration is lost when they are not fully engaged and low level disturbances occur. There is still a small group of pupils whose behaviour causes significant concerns. The school has identified many of the reasons for their difficult behaviour and is working with them, their parents and with local agencies to remedy the problem and give the appropriate levels of advice and support.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved. A higher proportion of good teaching was seen during this visit, all in Key Stage 2. However, there is too much satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 1 and some inadequate teaching remains in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Positive improvements have been made to the planning of lessons and assessment is used increasingly accurately to identify activities that match pupils learning needs and help them to improve. Teaching is at its most effective when

lessons engage pupils' interest. A practical mathematics lesson observed engaged pupils' good interest and concentration because it involved the pupils in problem solving. In order to make chef's special fruit salad, pupils worked in groups to work out the required proportions and then used scales to measure accurately the weights of different fruits before combining them together. The best part was eating and enjoying their work! Pupils' good learning is also promoted by teachers who use their ongoing assessments to adapt their lessons so as to meet pupils' needs more accurately. Data from assessment is used well to identify those who are underachieving. Strategies to support these pupils, especially in the many intervention groups provided, are addressing the gaps in their learning and helping them to make better progress. Where learning is less effective, such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers do not sufficiently understand how these young children learn and use their interests to excite curiosity and children's desire to experiment and to explore new ideas.

The school uses many effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and in sharing good practice which are raising the quality of both teaching and learning. The leading teacher has successfully delivered a range of targeted support to teachers and pupils in specific year groups which has had a good impact. Consistent approaches to sharing the objective of the lessons with pupils and in giving constructive feedback to pupils on their work and progress has significantly improved. Procedures are consistently applied but the usefulness of teachers' comments in marking and the use of targets for improvement are still of a mixed quality.

The curriculum is satisfactorily adapted to meet pupils' learning needs. Generally, the curriculum does not sufficiently reflect the local circumstances of the pupils or the need to involve boys more effectively in their learning. Lesson planning does not yet sufficiently ensure boys' high involvement in lessons. Not enough activities provide boys with a desire to research and to find out for themselves and then actively to want to write about what they have discovered. Better links are now made between most subjects and English which gives more purposeful reasons for reading and writing. Pupils are encouraged to use these skills more actively to support their good progress. A good example of this is the recently introduced web blog which encourages pupils to write daily about different images and news stories. Links between subjects are not yet sufficiently well planned to use and apply pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge or to provide an exciting creative reason for learning. Intervention support groups are used well to focus on specific difficulties so that pupils make better progress.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching by developing rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation that pinpoints strengths and areas for improvement, so that best practice is disseminated and support is provided where provision is weaker – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher has completed her work at the school. During her association, she provided valuable experience and strategic support, especially to the interim headteacher and interim executive board. Leadership at all levels is stronger and increasing in effectiveness. The interim headteacher, supported by her senior management team, is providing purposeful leadership and direction to the work of the school. Together, they have continued to focus sharply on improving teaching and learning and raising standards. They have a good and accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have worked hard to drive forward some important developments. As a result, standards are beginning to rise. Staff have worked hard and responded well to this challenge and their determination to succeed remains. There is a rigorous approach to checking classroom practice, which has also involved staff from the local authority. Strengths are being identified and shared internally and weaknesses are being tackled much more systematically. However, despite leaders' best efforts, strategies to improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage have not sufficiently resolved a number of major weaknesses.

A wide range of data is gathered following monitoring and evaluation activities. This is used well to evaluate the impact of strategies and determine the next steps for improvement. Although this is shared appropriately with the interim executive board and local authority, reporting systems are often descriptive and contain too much information. The interim executive board has increased its challenge to the school's senior leaders by asking testing questions and holding school leaders to account for the progress made on school improvement. Leaders are increasingly holding each teacher responsible for the progress pupils are making. Outcomes of termly progress meetings and school improvement plan reviews are being used well to target support and intervention for identified pupils at an earlier stage. Subject leaders with responsibility for literacy and numeracy have received appropriate training to help them evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are inadequate. The phase leader has made insufficient improvement in addressing identified weaknesses. In addition, she does not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in the Nursery and Foundation classes or how to remedy those areas requiring improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen leadership at all levels by clarifying roles and responsibilities and by developing accountability, robust management systems, rigorous self-evaluation and effective improvement planning – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. Its advisory staff visit regularly and they have helped to improve provision, especially in the quality of teaching and learning. However, positive and sustained improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has yet to be fully realised. The school improvement adviser provides a realistic appraisal of progress since the school went into special measures. The School Improvement Partner has good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do to improve. Good support from the special needs team is helping school leaders develop a more strategic approach to supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support from the education welfare officer has improved but there remains much to do to increase the attendance levels of some pupils. The school is participating in the National Leaders in Education project and is developing increasingly effective links with a school from a different local authority.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of leadership, teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Increase rates of progress made by boys in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school so that they match those of girls.
- Continue to implement strategies to improve writing and narrow the gap with standards in reading.
- Provide a curriculum that is stimulating, interesting and enjoyable for all pupils and makes appropriate connections with other subjects.