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1 July 2009

Mr M Wynne
The Headteacher
Yardley Wood Community Primary School
School Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B14 4ER

Dear Mr Wynne

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Yardley Wood School

Following my visit with Fran Ashworth to your school on 17 and 18 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 January 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Yardley Wood Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection visit a new deputy headteacher has commenced working at the school. A phase leader has been appointed from the school's existing staff.

Achievement and standards

Although there is evidence of improvement, significant inconsistencies remain. Progress in Year 6 is increasing, and this is helping overcome the legacy of previous underachievement. However, pupils' progress in other year groups is too uneven. The progress of more able pupils is still insufficient in many year groups, although pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to make satisfactory progress. There are signs of improved pupil progress in English and to a lesser extent in mathematics. Nevertheless, there has been very little improvement in science since the school's inspection in January 2008. In all subjects pupils do not apply their learning sufficiently. Pupils' work across the curriculum does not consistently show how pupils are addressing their literacy and numeracy targets. Many pupils struggle when faced with answering questions which are posed in an unfamiliar way.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and accelerate the rate of progress of the average and above average attaining pupils – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be good. Pupils are very happy at the school. When they were asked about what they like they said 'everything'. They enjoy most lessons, playing with their friends, and are particularly pleased with the new toilets. When they have interesting materials and know what they must do to be successful, they try their best to produce high quality work. A minority of younger pupils find it difficult to behave well and occasionally, when this is not managed effectively by the teacher, this interferes with the learning of others in the class. Paired discussion is well established with even the youngest pupils being able to share ideas and listen well. Older pupils work well in groups as a result of the attention the school has given to promoting team work. Pupils are very willing to

take on responsibilities, including young children acting as 'envoys' for their group, informing the rest of the class about what they have been doing. Attendance is below average.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. No inadequate teaching was seen on this visit and the amount of good teaching is gradually increasing. All teachers are taking more care when planning lessons, resulting in activities designed for three levels of ability. Teaching assistants are usually well deployed. There is a better match between the tasks pupils undertake and their abilities, particularly for the middle and lower ability groups. The practice of involving pupils in evaluating their own learning is now widespread. The outcomes of this are used by many teachers to fine tune the next lesson, so that it is even more appropriate to the needs of pupils. More attention is given to learning outcomes, although pupils in some year groups struggle to remember their individual targets. Many lessons have a good mix of activities and include stimulating resources. The lessons seen in mathematics, for example on perimeter and area, were not as effective as some English lessons because teachers did not commence with meaningful examples, for instance a consideration of the coverings for the hall floor that the school is about to purchase.

Teachers use information and communication technology well but very little evidence was seen of this technology being used by pupils. Younger pupils are spending less time on the carpet. As a result, concentration levels are improving and teaching assistants have a greater impact on learning. In some classes the work is challenging for all abilities, for instance the most able pupils in Year 6 pupils said they felt challenged virtually all of the time. The most able in Years 1 to 5 are not challenged enough. In these year groups there are too few opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to demonstrate higher-order thinking, including the use and application of the concepts being taught.

Older pupils like the use of film and this has contributed to the better progress in literacy. However, writing in other subjects is of a lower standard than that seen in literacy. For example, work in pupils' topic books shows that topic planning is not used well to reinforce the targets pupils have for spelling, writing and punctuation. Less attention has been given to improving the teaching of mathematics, although the school is now ensuring teachers include more activities that encourage mathematical thinking and alternative ways of solving problems. In Year 3, evidence was seen of pupils identifying questions that were the starting point for appropriately challenging scientific investigations. This promising development was the exception because elsewhere the evidence in pupils' books suggests too great a reliance on worksheets and too much left for the Year 6 teacher to cover.

The feedback provided to pupils about their work is much better although some inconsistencies remain. Most teachers are making sure that pupils have the opportunity to respond to their comments.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring teachers plan lessons which provide all pupils with sufficient challenge and activities that are well matched to their ability – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management continues to improve. Key staff are now in place, including a deputy headteacher who has quickly demonstrated a grasp of the issues to be addressed. At middle leadership level the confidence of leaders is growing, although these leaders have not had sufficient time to demonstrate their effectiveness in the newer aspects of their roles. The school is well aware of the need to ensure leaders maintain an accurate overview of subject development across the entire school.

There is more consistency in the preparation of lessons and classroom practices generally. The range of activities used to monitor the work of the school is now comprehensive, giving the school the potential to gain a more complete picture. Work scrutiny, pupil conversations, learning walks and teacher self-assessment supplement the evidence gained from lesson observations and information about pupils' attainment. The school has begun to develop an evaluation of its overall effectiveness and has correctly identified the need to further enhance the curriculum. The school's judgement about the progress made in improving teaching and learning is correct. However, despite the existence of a great deal of evidence, the school has not teased out in sufficient detail the relative weaknesses that need to be eliminated to make teaching and learning even better.

Although leaders have a good understanding of standards in different year groups, there is uncertainty about the progress of different groups of learners. The school acknowledges that this is an important priority for improvement. The chair of governors has a good awareness of the day to day issues in the school. However, the strategic role of governors as a whole is hampered by the lack of concise information about pupil progress that can be used to monitor the impact of initiatives. The school has continued to improve the environment to ensure the pupils' safety. The non-teaching member of staff responsible for day to day management of safeguarding is highly vigilant in her role.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management to bring greater rigour to monitoring the work of the school – satisfactory
- ensure all safeguarding procedures are fully met – good.

External support

The school speaks positively about the support it has received from the local authority, including from consultants and advanced skills teachers. This has contributed to the improvements made in teaching and learning. Support from the

local authority's asset management sector has been instrumental in further improving the quality and security of the campus. The local authority's review of the school's progress contains an accurate measure of the quality of teaching and learning.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure more effective use of success criteria and objectives in order that all pupils are consistently challenged.
- Further clarify the roles of staff in evaluating the work of the school and monitor more frequently in order that staff receive more timely guidance on how they can improve.