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Mrs O Stanswood
Headteacher
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Droylsden
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M43 6GD

Dear Mrs Stanswood

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Manchester Road Primary School

Following my visit with Geoff Lawrence, additional inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

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 Director of Children's Services for Tameside.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Manchester Road Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 July 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, which included visiting 17 lessons, scrutinising school documents and meeting with the acting headteacher, members of staff, pupils, the chair of governors, a parent governor and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection in January 2009 there have been significant changes to the leadership. An associate headteacher was appointed to the school by the local authority on a part-time basis prior to the last inspection. Following the inspection, the headteacher resigned his post. The associate headteacher immediately became the full-time acting headteacher. The deputy headteacher returned to the school from her sabbatical in March 2009, initially on a part-time basis, increasing to full-time in June 2009. The associate headteacher resigned her post and left the school one week prior to this first monitoring inspection. The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher and had been in post for six days at the time of this inspection. The governors have appointed a permanent headteacher, who will start in September 2009. He visited the school during the inspection. One teacher is on maternity leave; her post is being covered by a temporary teacher. The governing body is now at full strength, with all vacancies filled.

Achievement and standards

Although the schools' unvalidated results from recent national assessment tests in Year 6 show that the standards reached by pupils have risen since the last inspection, the school has not met its targets in English and mathematics and pupils' achievement remains poor.

Pupils start in Year 1 with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of five-year-olds nationally. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008, they reached below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Fewer pupils reached the higher Level 3 than is found nationally. In 2009, the schools' recent unvalidated assessment data show that standards at the end of Year 2 are better than those reached in the previous two years with more pupils reaching broadly average standards, although the number of pupils reaching Level 3 in writing has declined. Despite the improvements, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is not yet satisfactory, particularly for the more able.

In Key Stage 2, the unvalidated test data show that the standards reached in 2009 in English, mathematics and science are closer to the national average than at the time of the last inspection, but standards are still below the national average overall.



The school's own data show that many of the pupils in Year 6 have not reached their potential, particularly in mathematics. The school has responded well to advice from consultants and as a result, more pupils attained the nationally expected Level 4 than in the previous two years. However, the work in pupils' exercise books demonstrates that many of them are not achieving as well as they should and that standards in most subjects remain below average. Pupils' books show that there is very little difference in the work set for the most able and least able pupils and as a result, higher ability pupils, in particular, do not achieve as well as they should. This is reflected across all classes in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly in mathematics. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are very cumbersome; consequently, the school does not have a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving. As a result, although positive steps are being taken, much remains to be done to tackle the legacy of underachievement. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve in line with their peers and they are now identified effectively, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2 – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

The personal development and well-being of pupils remain satisfactory and the positive features reported in the last inspection are still evident. The majority of behaviour observed during the inspection was satisfactory, though where teaching was weak, pupils' attitudes towards learning were less positive and there was some minor misbehaviour. Some pupils expressed their concern to inspectors that behaviour around the school and in lessons needs to be improved. Some overly boisterous behaviour, mainly from boys, was observed by inspectors in the playground, but the staff management of this was satisfactory. Although pupils are aware of how to keep fit and healthy, they do not always make healthy choices. During the inspection, many pupils ate unhealthy snacks at break times. This was reinforced by the Year 6 enterprise work, where pupils were being encouraged to buy unhealthy sweets. Pupils' attendance remains average. The personal development and well-being of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) remain good.

Quality of provision

Staff appreciate the advice and support they are receiving from local authority consultants. Teachers say they are implementing advice and feel their teaching has improved as a result. The lessons observed by inspectors were generally of a satisfactory quality or better. No outstanding teaching was seen during the visit and a very small proportion of lessons were inadequate. In the weaker lessons observed, pupils made very little progress. This was mainly because the introduction to the lesson was too long, pupils were sitting on the carpet and became inattentive and the work was not well matched to their ability or interests. In the weaker lessons teachers' plans did not always show how work was targeted for different ability



levels or what pupils were expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. The volume of work achieved in the weaker lessons was too small and teacher expectations too low. In the good lessons, relationships were positive and teaching was more imaginative. The level of challenge was well judged and pupils worked together effectively to complete tasks within a given time. Teachers used resources such as the interactive whiteboard well and provided a balance between group and individual activities. For example, in a good Year 5 mathematics lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to share their work on the whiteboard with the class so they could all check their understanding. The dialogue between the teacher and pupils enabled pupils to explain where they were struggling and the teacher then targeted her support effectively and the pupils made good progress. Some good links were made between information and communication technology (ICT) and other subjects such as geography. The support provided by teaching assistants is variable. In some lessons they work effectively with groups of pupils or individuals. However, on some occasions, particularly during lengthy teacher introductions, their time is not well managed.

The curriculum remains satisfactory. Some important steps have been taken to introduce a national framework which enables pupils to make more rapid progress, particularly in English and mathematics. However, although an appropriate balance is given to the basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT, the curriculum is not always well planned to meet pupils' different levels of ability. Consequently, some of the more able pupils, in particular, are not provided with sufficient challenge. In some subjects, such as mathematics, the less able pupils are provided with work that is far too challenging for their ability because the teachers are overly concerned with providing work that is age appropriate. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; however, the effectiveness of provision for these pupils is not yet evaluated fully.

Teachers' understanding of assessment is more secure, though it is still at an early stage of development. Marking is improving. Subject leaders are monitoring pupils' exercise books and there is an agreed marking code which staff follow. There is some good practice where pupils indicate to the teacher whether they understand their work. In the best lessons, teachers use this information effectively to plan the next steps in pupils learning. Tracking systems do not enable staff to know whether pupils are making progress. Class teachers and subject leaders are not routinely provided with the pupils' overall targets or their starting points, so they are unable to pinpoint whether individual pupils are on target or underachieving. The measures used to track pupils' progress are too wide; therefore, any subtle changes within their levels of achievement are not picked up or acted upon. There is also some confusion between the tracking system for teacher assessment and testing, which is leading to incompatibility of judgements with regard to pupils' progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that it consistently provides pupils with the challenge needed for them to learn as they should – satisfactory

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking so that it lets pupils know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve their work further – satisfactory
- Ensure that information about pupils' progress is used effectively and consistently by all teachers to meet pupils' learning needs fully – inadequate

Leadership and management

In the five months since the school was inspected, there has been significant disruption to leadership. Governors say the associate headteacher improved systems for communication, such as regular reporting to the governing body and better communication with parents and staff. Her work is appreciated by staff and governors alike. An attempt has also been made to gather pupil views, but, although these are now known, they are not always acted upon. For example, pupils say they dislike sitting on dirty carpets, but this is a practice which occurs in most classrooms, sometimes for lengthy periods of time. Staff say morale is good and they are keen to continue to work with consultants to improve their practice. Senior leaders recognise that their knowledge of teaching and learning across the school is limited. The systems to track pupils' progress are ineffective. Managers at all levels do not have a clear picture of pupils' achievement. This means that underachievement is not identified early enough and support is not targeted effectively. In the short time that the deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher, she has involved teaching staff in analysing the progress made by the pupils in their class. However, this is at a very early stage of development and there is a lack of clarity surrounding the 'expected progress' for pupils. Systems to hold staff to account for pupils' achievement are not in place and some staff report that they have not had a performance management interview for at least two years. Staff do not have up-to-date job descriptions which reflect the current national terms and conditions of employment. This means that there are some staff who are unaware of the national requirements for their level of remuneration. The governing body is aware of the issues facing the school and is keen to support the leadership. Governors say that support from the local authority is enabling them to feel better prepared to hold the school to account, however, they realise that they are still very reliant on the quality of information provided to them by the school.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that managers rigorously evaluate all aspects of the school's work in order to identify and speedily address weaknesses in performance – inadequate

External support

External challenge and support are provided effectively by the local authority. Following the last inspection the local authority intervened quickly by providing a full-time associate headteacher who took over the strategic planning and day-to-day management of the school. Substantial support and challenge to improve teaching and learning have been provided for staff by local authority consultants. They have



worked to the local authority plan for improvement, which is targeting support strategically to good effect. Teachers say they feel more confident and appreciate the opportunities to work alongside subject specialists in their own classrooms. The local authority has plans of good quality to support the new headteacher from September, which include financial support to eradicate the budget deficit.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all staff have an up-to-date job description which reflects the national 'Professional Standards for Teachers' and that performance management is implemented.
- Improve the system to manage pupil assessment data so that managers can identify any underachievement quickly.