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8 July 2009

Ms Joyce Moore
Interim Headteacher
Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit
Smallwood Road
Garrett Lane
London
SW17 0TW

Dear Ms Moore

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit

Following my visit with Michael Milton, additional inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 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

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 Director of Children's Services for Wandsworth.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Smallwood Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 July 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work; scrutinised documents and pupils' written work; and met with the interim headteacher, other staff, pupils, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and the School Improvement Partner.

Context

While the temporary arrangements for the senior leadership of the school continue, appointments have now been made to the new staffing structure. A substantive leadership team has been appointed, with a new headteacher taking up post in January 2010 and two assistant headteachers joining the school in September 2009. The incoming headteacher will develop links with the IEB and interim headteacher during the autumn term to facilitate a smooth transition. The school still has some temporary teachers but the appointment of senior and middle leaders puts it in a much stronger position to sustain improvement.

Achievement and standards

The school continues to make good progress in raising standards of attainment. The provisional results of national tests at the end of Year 6 show a marked improvement, indicating that standards are coming into line with national averages. This confirms that pupils are making good progress from their well below average starting points.

Systems for tracking and reviewing individual pupils' progress are embedded in Key Stage 2 with reliable teacher assessment and effective target setting. Approaches to tracking the progress of different groups of pupils are being developed. Concerns about pupils' reading in Year 3 are being tackled and recent assessment information shows that pupils are catching up. Pupils are making excellent progress in writing.

Standards in Key Stage 1 remain low, reflecting the unevenness of children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and less secure teaching and assessment. Processes for establishing an accurate baseline for children's skills, understanding and knowledge on entry to the school are being established alongside systems to track progress against early learning goals. There is more to do in ensuring that younger children have a clearer idea of what they need to do to improve their work.

Personal development and well-being

The well-being of pupils is given a high priority. Pupils are known and valued as individuals. The school now provides a far richer range of experiences to support

their personal development. Pupils enjoy school and feel well cared for and safe. Incidents of bullying and racism are rare and, when they do occur, they are dealt with effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. A strong, shared set of values permeate the school. Pupils and staff know the 'golden rules' very well. Relationships throughout the school are positive and the consistency of behaviour management gives pupils confidence and security. Pupils appreciate the diversity of their school community. When one Year 5 pupil was asked what he liked about the school, he said proudly, 'It's multicultural; we learn a lot from each other.'

Improved standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 contribute to pupils' future economic well-being. However, experiences of the world of work and work-related learning are limited. Pupils are considerate of each other and ready to take on more responsibility within the school and the wider community.

Attendance is still below the national average but the number of pupils with 100% attendance has increased. The percentage of persistent absence has decreased to fall in line with the national average.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by improving behaviour and ensuring that all pupils are safe and well cared for – good

Quality of provision

The school continues to improve teaching and learning. Practice in Key Stage 2 is more consistently good and sometimes outstanding. It is also good in the Nursery but satisfactory elsewhere in the main school. In the language unit, teaching is usually good and now frequently outstanding. Common features of the most effective practice are:

- clear planning with well-sequenced activities that develop skills and understanding
- appropriately challenging learning objectives
- good links with previous learning
- questioning that consolidates and probes pupils' understanding
- transparent success criteria and skilful modelling of success
- identification of learning skills and methods
- teaching assistants well deployed to support and accelerate pupils' learning
- marking that gives pupils clear, meaningful, subject specific guidance about how to improve.

Areas for development include refining differentiation, extending opportunities for pupils to apply learning independently, and developing pupils' oral skills to support higher-level thinking.

Guidance for pupils has improved. There is good practice in identifying next learning steps in marking, which is yet to be shared with all staff. The curriculum continues to

develop. The effective focus on core subjects is being widened to include other subjects. Pupils are benefiting from visits to places of interest and a wider range of clubs. They also enjoy meeting an increasing number of visitors who lend variety and relevance to the curriculum. Pupils are far more engaged in learning and enjoy the greater emphasis on practical activities.

There has been good improvement in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the curriculum does not yet cater well for the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide consistently good levels of challenge and clear academic guidance for their pupils – good
 - ensuring that the curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and provides enjoyable activities that capture the interest of the pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The interim leadership team has been very effective in consolidating improvements in challenging circumstances. The part-time deputy headteacher leaves at the end of this term. She has provided excellent support to the interim headteacher. Together, they have operated as a highly effective team. Their clarity about what is required to improve the school and their refusal to compromise high expectations have ensured that the school has come through a difficult period successfully. Senior leaders' self-evaluation is robust, accurate and focused tenaciously on improving outcomes for pupils. A core of longer-serving teachers and support staff has been dedicated to and relentless in limiting the impact of staff turnover on pupils.

The interim headteacher, IEB and local authority have taken concerted and determined action to stabilise staffing at a senior- and middle-leadership level. While newly appointed teams have yet to take up the reins and drive improvement, certainty and clarity about roles and responsibilities are the foundations for building further capacity to improve. The interim headteacher is developing the staff who are internal appointments to the new structure so that the rapid pace of improvement is maintained in September, when the structure is implemented. The IEB is working cohesively and more strategically. It benefits from the clear direction of the chair, who ensures that parents' views are represented. Preparations for setting up a shadow governing body will begin in the autumn term.

Current leaders are acutely aware that the next imperative is to establish a full complement of permanent teachers. The ongoing support of the local authority will be a critical factor in achieving this quickly.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by improving the ability of leaders, including the governors, to evaluate the work of the school accurately and to pursue improvement rigorously – good

External support

The local authority and School Improvement Partner are providing good support to the school. The additional funding and expertise extended to the school through City Challenge has been greatly valued by the school. It has been sharply focused on improving teaching and learning, in particular with a view to improving outcomes for Key Stage 2 pupils.