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2 July 2009

Mrs Mary Whitehead
Interim Headteacher
Brooklands Primary School
Medebourne Close
Casterbridge Road
London
SE3 9AB

Dear Mrs Whitehead

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Brooklands Primary School

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, additional inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 June 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 – 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 Director of Children's Services for Greenwich.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Brooklands Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and spoke informally with parents, carers and pupils. Meetings were held with the school council, the interim headteacher, three senior leaders, two governors and the lead inspector for the school from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher is currently on sick leave and the interim headteacher has been leading the school since March. This is a part-time arrangement in partnership with the interim headteacher's school. The two schools are within a few miles of each other and serve similar communities. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been reviewed and a fourth member has been appointed. Subject leadership roles have been allocated to other members of staff. The governing body has recently reviewed its membership and their roles and responsibilities. An additional governor was appointed to support their work. A new parent governor was recently appointed and a further election for more parent governors is imminent. The Year 5 class is currently taught by a supply teacher following the maternity leave and planned resignation of the class teacher. There have been few other staff changes since the last inspection.

Achievement and standards

The unvalidated results for the recent end of Key Stage 2 tests show that the school has exceeded its targets in English, mathematics and science, including those for Level 5. In the rest of the school, the termly tracking of reading, writing and mathematics shows that, as the year has progressed, more pupils have reached standards that are above those expected nationally. This suggests that pupils are now making better progress than they were at the time of the last inspection. However, whether or not individual pupils, cohorts and specific groups have made sufficient progress has not yet been evaluated.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise standards and accelerate the progress made by all pupils, in particular, the more able girls in Key Stage 1, those at an early stage of learning to speak English and those born in the summer months – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The interim headteacher recently canvassed pupils' views about how things have changed and inspectors corroborated these views through their discussions with

different groups and individuals. Pupils are very positive about the changes that have been made since the last inspection and feel that these have made a difference to their learning. For example, they say that they work harder and faster than they did before, and that they have improved the presentation of their work. It is clear that pupils are very loyal to and proud of their school and that they are rising to the challenge of doing things differently in class. They have also responded positively to other changes, such as less time for play and more explicit guidelines for their behaviour. Rates of attendance remain above the national average.

Quality of provision

Observations in lessons indicate that, because of the improved understanding of where pupils are in their learning and a more focused approach to learning by teachers, achievement is improving. The teaching seen during the inspection was generally satisfactory or better, and this reflected the school's own monitoring of lessons and pupils' work. Relationships in class between pupils and staff and between the pupils themselves are good. In response to issues raised in the last inspection, there has been an appropriate focus on enabling the work of the support staff to be more integrated into the learning in class. This has been effective. Support staff are actively and purposefully involved because there is a clearer focus on learning and more specific direction through teachers' planning. Lesson plans have improved for English, mathematics and science but planning for different groups of ability is not yet specific enough. This is because there is an overemphasis on groups completing different amounts of work, rather than on different activities to meet a range of learning objectives according to pupils' needs.

In general, there is more professional debate among staff at all levels. This has happened because appropriately targeted professional development has given staff a greater awareness of good primary practice. There are three things that need to be tackled next. First, the focus now needs to be on meeting the needs of different groups more effectively by making better use of the improved tracking data. Second, teachers' marking and feedback needs to be more consistently matched to what pupils are learning and what they need to do next, in ways that are easily understood and encourages them to do something about it. Third, presentation of work in pupils' books has improved but is still not good enough.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching and learning by establishing consistent planning, accurate assessment and the setting of challenging targets – satisfactory

Leadership and management

Actions taken by the senior leadership team have successfully halted the decline in pupils' achievement. This has set the scene for an accelerated pace of improvement for the next academic year. This has happened because the team addressed two significant issues quickly and sensibly. They provided appropriately focused training for staff so that they have a better understanding of contemporary good practice

and recent initiatives. This includes getting to grips with updated national strategies and how to target and track pupils' progress effectively at whole-school and class level. But this would not have been so well received if senior leaders had not addressed issues of staff morale. Senior leaders readily accepted their responsibility for the school's shortcomings and acknowledged the accuracy of the issues raised at the last inspection. This quickly gave staff the confidence, as well as the necessary training, to make a sound start on what needed to be done.

On taking over the running of the school, the interim headteacher quickly reviewed the work of the senior leadership team. Key aspects of the school's work have been distributed among the team, including the leadership of each key stage, of literacy and of numeracy. The appointment of an additional member to the team, who is responsible for Key Stage 1, science, and information and communication technology, has strengthened the team. Each member is now very clear about their individual and collective responsibilities and accountability. They have agreed upon the way forward and this is beginning to make a difference to the way that all staff focus on how well pupils are doing in lessons. For example, through a better understanding of data, senior leaders have helped teachers to reconsider their responsibilities for improved learning among different groups of pupils. The senior team now needs to ensure that school improvement plans focus sharply on measuring the impact of their actions on pupils' achievements.

The tracking of pupils' attainments, facilitated by the introduction of an electronic system, is providing a range of data that is more robust and is helping the school to have a better understanding of pupils' achievement. Furthermore, governors, senior leaders and teachers are starting to appreciate how this can inform their work. The attainment of different groups of pupils is being tracked and there has been some debate about the amount of progress that should be expected each year, such as the expectation for a whole National Curriculum level, to eliminate previous underachievement. The next step is for a thorough analysis of the standards of work that pupils have attained this academic year and then a rigorous evaluation of whether or not the progress they have made is good enough and why. This then needs to inform suitably challenging targets for individuals and groups for the next academic year, as well as to determine which pupils will benefit from additional support programmes from the autumn term.

The governing body has taken appropriate steps to review their effectiveness. They have sought the views of parents and carers and have started to respond to some of the issues raised. For example, through the school newsletter, their notice board and their presence in school, governors are more visible within the community. A working party was established to consider how to set up a parent council and this will be in place for the beginning of the autumn term. It is clear that the governing body and senior leadership team are united in their determination to make the necessary changes to improve the provision. However, not all parents and carers are entirely convinced that it will happen soon enough. There is a great deal of uncertainty about the current leadership of the school. In the absence of the substantive headteacher, parents and carers welcomed the appointment of the



interim headteacher, but are unsure about the partnership arrangements between the two schools and want to know what will happen next. Similarly, the role of the deputy headteacher in relation to the part-time arrangements is not well understood. This needs to be given immediate consideration so that the times when the deputy headteacher is in charge of the school are clearly understood and her role made explicit with regard to the different aspects of her responsibilities.

Following the last inspection, concerns raised about arrangements for safeguarding pupils were addressed quickly. A suitable single central record of the checks made on staff is in place and meets the current statutory government requirements.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management at all levels, as a matter of urgency, through sharply focused school development planning based on accurate self-evaluation, so that there is a clear direction for the school – satisfactory
- improve systems for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress and guiding and supporting their academic learning, so that all teachers and leaders have a clear understanding, and a long-term view, of what all pupils are capable of achieving – satisfactory
- ensure that the school complies fully with current government requirements for safeguarding – satisfactory

External support

The local authority acted swiftly to secure the interim leadership of the school. They have provided timely and appropriate support, which has been well received by the leadership team and classroom staff alike. Pupils too appreciate the work of external professionals working in their classrooms, saying that it helps them to do better because it is helping their teachers to do things differently. The support has enabled staff to take ownership, with confidence, of what needs to be done. The local authority has provided the additional information required to support their statement of action for the school, which is now satisfactory, and a revised plan will be formulated in time for the next academic year.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve communication with parents and carers so that:
 - the current leadership arrangements are clearly understood
 - the skills and commitment that parents and carers bring to the school are appropriately utilised so that their efforts can assist the further development of the school.