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10 December 2009

Mr Nick Munns
Executive headteacher
Monteagle Primary School
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Dear Mr Munns

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Monteagle Primary School

Following my visit with David Hatchett, additional inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 December 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 – satisfactory

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 Barking and Dagenham.

Yours sincerely
Graham Lee
Additional inspector

September 2009

PROTECT-INSPECTION
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Monteagle Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 8–9 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work and looked at documents such as teachers' planning, data about pupils' progress and the school development plan. They met with the executive headteacher, other staff in leadership positions, representatives of the school council, the school improvement partner and a member of the interim executive board. The focus of the visit was on Key Stage 2. A total of 12 lessons were observed, almost all in Key Stage 2, and inspectors also looked through samples of pupils' work.

Context

This term an additional Reception class has been opened as the local authority has an unusually large number of pupils of this age in its schools. A number of staff left at the end of the summer term and have been replaced by permanent teachers. Only one agency teacher remains. The leadership team has been completed by the appointment of a new year group leader in Year 3. The interim executive board continues to oversee the work of the school but is currently appointing a shadow governing body with a view to restoring full delegated powers to a new governing body from September 2010.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Levels of attainment fell at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2009 because many of the children started school with very low-level skills and understanding. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment was again broadly average, although they did not do as well in writing. Nevertheless, this represents good progress from often low starting points when they begin school.

The published results at the end of Year 6 in 2009 confirmed that attainment was low and that too many pupils had made inadequate progress during their years in Key Stage 2. Some pupils with special educational needs had made little or no progress. It was clear that pupils had made better progress in Year 6 but this was insufficient to make up for a legacy of underachievement. Pupils' progress in lessons in Key Stage 2 is now much more consistent because of better teaching. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and apply themselves well for the most part. They cooperate well in pairs and groups. Pupils with special educational needs are making as much progress as their peers. Some pupils of all abilities are very reliant on the adults around them and find it difficult to



develop their own ideas. This is exacerbated in some science lessons, in particular, when they don't have sufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas and devise their own methods of recording. Pupils in the current Year 6 are attaining at higher levels and are on task to meet their challenging targets in English, mathematics and science, both in terms of their levels of attainment and rates of progress.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards, particularly at Key Stage 2, in mathematics and science – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are very positive about the school and enjoy most of what it has to offer. As a result of the leadership team's concerted efforts, attendance and punctuality are improving significantly. Pupils' behaviour is now consistently good in lessons and mostly around the school. Everybody is clear about the school's expectations and, as a result, there have been no exclusions so far this year. This represents a dramatic improvement on previous years.

The effectiveness of provision

The establishment of a permanent team has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 since the last monitoring visit. Two out of three lessons were of good or better quality and some outstanding teaching was seen. This is a similar picture to the school's own recent assessments. This increasing consistency is helping pupils to make better progress and catch up from the legacy of underachievement. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are rising, although in a few lessons, notably in mathematics and science, there is insufficient challenge for pupils of different abilities, notably at the higher and lower ends of the scale.

Teachers have good relationships with their classes and generally manage them well. They make good use of resources, particularly interactive technology, to engage and motivate learners. Where teaching is most effective, teachers make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils and plan activities that are closely matched to their needs. They use a range of lively teaching strategies and effective questioning, making frequent checks during lessons to ensure that pupils are making progress. For example, in an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 4 the teacher posed challenging problems to help pupils to develop their understanding of time. They were encouraged to devise their own strategies and explain their reasoning, which led to very good progress. Sometimes, insufficient attention is



given to the different abilities of pupils in the class and pupils do not have enough opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning. In mathematics and science, in particular, there remains an over-reliance on worksheets and textbooks. This often fails to extend pupils' learning. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they could, particularly in applying their mathematical and scientific knowledge.

Relatively new systems for assessing pupils' work are not yet fully embedded and academic guidance remains variable. For example, teachers are now marking to assess how well pupils have met the objectives of lessons. Some teachers are doing this very effectively, giving pupils good guidance about how to 'close the gap' in their understanding. However, this is not the case in all classes. There are too many occasions when the teacher has noted that the objectives have not been fully met and yet no guidance is given about how work might be improved. The use of target setting is not yet consistently effective and not all pupils know their targets. Where targets do exist, they are not always evaluated regularly enough to be helpful to pupils.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum are currently limited. The school is well equipped with computers now and, while discrete sessions are often effective, opportunities to use ICT in the classroom to support learning in other subjects are often missed. The school has identified that writing is a relative weakness and currently opportunities are limited for pupils to write at length in different subjects and for a variety of audiences and purposes.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge in lessons so that the different needs of all pupils are met – good.
- use assessment and monitoring information to match support, guidance and the curriculum to the needs of all pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher, supported by the leadership team, continues to provide a very clear direction to the school which is understood and supported by all members of the school community. This drive for improvement is evident in the development plan and it is clear that the school is on track to meet its ambitious targets for raising achievement and improving teaching by the end of the year. Leaders at all levels are using data to check the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. This work has been hampered this term as it has become evident that the current tracking system is not entirely fit for purpose. It is not



rooted firmly in teacher assessment and does not provide leaders with accurate enough information to demonstrate the progress of individuals and groups of pupils from term to term.

Leadership has been strengthened with the recent appointment of two year group leaders in the lower juniors. This means that leadership at this level is now robust and a key influence, through example, in leading improvement in teaching and learning. Senior leaders continue to have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and are committed to improving it still further. The strategy of 'buddying' teachers who need support with good role models, for example, has been very successful. The quality of leadership at subject level is variable in terms of its impact on the improvement. The relatively new English leader has implemented a new policy for handwriting and presentation, which is helping to raise teachers' expectations in this area. The impact of monitoring in mathematics and science is not as clear. Issues identified in previous monitoring visits and through the checking of books, for example, have not been followed up with sufficient rigour, and many of the weaknesses persist.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen the rigour of monitoring and evaluation by leaders at all levels to secure rapid improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support, notably in English, mathematics and science, to improve the quality of teaching. There are also plans to work with the local authority to develop ICT in the new year. Much of this support is 'hands on' and appreciated by staff. The school improvement partner works closely with the school and provides effective support and challenge to its leaders.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the school's tracking and assessment systems accurately measure the progress of individuals and groups of pupils from term to term.

