

Suite 22 West
Lancs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

23 November 2009

Mrs J Ngenda
Headteacher
Blueberry Park Primary School
Ackers Hall Avenue
Liverpool
L14 2DY

Dear Mrs Ngenda

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Blueberry Park Primary School

Following my visit with Dee Brigstock and Frank Ravey, additional inspectors, to your school on 19 and 20 November 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 - satisfactory.
- 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 (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Blueberry Park Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 19 – 20 November 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior managers, a group of pupils, a member of the IEB and the School Improvement Partner.

Context

Four members of staff left the school at the end of the summer term 2009. The number of classes has reduced from eight to six in Key Stage 2 and from four to two in Key Stage 1. All classes in Key Stage 2 now contain mixed-aged year groups. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will commence duties at the beginning of the spring term 2010. The acting deputy headteacher from a neighbouring school will leave the school at the end of the current term, but will remain in contact with the school as a new member of the IEB.

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

Pupils' work in books, as well as the school's own assessment data, suggests that the school continues to make satisfactory progress in improving pupils' achievement. Although standards as indicated in the assessments and test results for 2009 are still well below the national average at age seven and eleven, the progress pupils make overall is steadily improving. For example, the proportion of pupils making expected levels of progress in English has risen from 75% to 81%. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making much better progress than previously as they move into Year 1. Approximately 70% of pupils in the current Year 6 have made greater than expected levels of progress in reading and writing in a period of just six weeks from the beginning of this term, reflecting the improving impact of the school's intervention and support. In addition, the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is increasing at the expected Level 2 and at the higher Level 3 in mathematics. This is because the school has strengthened the way it tracks pupils' achievement and staff have a greater understanding of the progress pupils should make. There are regular discussions of how well pupils are achieving. Staff are taking greater responsibility for their actions and are more decisive in their analysis of data. Although not yet consistent in all classes, there is a steady improvement in the accuracy of how activities are matched to individual needs in lessons and in identifying those pupils who require additional support and greater challenge.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:



- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils show positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour is improving. This is because lessons are now more interesting and pupils are more involved in their work. For example, pupils speak positively about how helpful teachers' marking of their work has become. One pupil captured this view well by saying, 'They help you to improve rather than saying your work is bad' and in saying this also captured a flavour of the positive relationships evident in the school. Teachers are now adopting a 'praise and advise' approach much more consistently, although occasionally the balance between positive and negative comments tips too far towards the latter.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has benefited from a whole-school focus on staff training. Teachers and teaching assistants agree that the training they have had, including the way in which they plan together in teams, has had a positive impact on the quality of their teaching and on pupils' learning.

More than half of the teaching observed was at least good and over 90% was at least satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last visit. Where teaching is good, pupils are interested and alert. They approach the learning tasks they are given with enthusiasm. Teachers use previous assessments accurately to tailor work to pupils' individual learning needs and the good relationships between adults and pupils are characterised by praise and humour. Teachers, when necessary, take a step back to assess how well pupils are doing before making interventions. They now have the confidence to let pupils talk to each other to come up with solutions to problems. An example of outstanding teaching in Year 6, involved pupils learning advanced vocabulary from 'A Christmas Carol.' Using an interactive whiteboard to remind themselves of the steps they had to take, a fast and furious quiz, paired working, and with focused interventions from the teacher and teaching assistant, pupils made excellent progress in acquiring advanced vocabulary and writing skills.

Teaching has improved considerably in certain parts of the school. For example, it is consistently stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. Examples of good teaching were seen throughout the school, but less frequently in Years 1 to 4, where there is still a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching. Where teaching is less strong, too much time is wasted on mundane tasks, such as sticking pictures into books, and the pace of learning is slower. On occasions, teachers still over-direct lessons, talk too much and do not leave enough time for pupils to practise and consolidate their learning independently. In these lessons, assessment



is not always used effectively enough to plan appropriately challenging work for all groups of pupils.

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is exciting and effective. It has improved significantly since the last visit. The indoor environments for Nursery and Reception children continue to be well planned and organised. The uncluttered classrooms are exciting learning spaces. Children access resources and put them away, promoting their independence well. They enjoy coming together as a class too, showing very good attitudes to learning as a group, as seen in physical education (PE) and in music. In PE, they respond very obediently to instructions, which they follow to the letter. Outdoors, the learning space is much improved. It is better planned and its use is more imaginative. Children enjoy the large playground equipment and riding their bikes and trikes. They also now use it to practise their writing on chalkboards, learn more about the world around them and share books together. Opportunities to read, write and practise their number skills now exist in almost all planned activities. However, the most striking aspect of their learning is in their improved personal development. Children show respect for each other and adults, and are keen to help and join in with learning tasks with enthusiasm. Even at this young age, they take the responsibility to tidy away all the resources they use during each session and they do this very well.

The assessment system in Early Years Foundation Stage is newly improved. Most assessments are made while children are practising their learning independently and staff store notes and photographs to illustrate children's achievements. They then use these very effectively to plan more challenging learning activities for individuals and for groups of children. This system is already lifting children's acquisition of early personal, reading, writing, and mathematical skills and shows that children are making better progress in their learning.

The school has maintained the good progress noted at the last visit in relation to making better use of assessment to plan lessons and to provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve their work. Further improvements to systems for monitoring pupils' progress now enable school leaders to have an increasingly sharp focus on how different groups of pupils are progressing. This, together with the increased and still growing body of data being gathered, has allowed them to identify, for example, that more-able pupils have recently made good progress. Work has started to help teachers assess pupils' attainment more accurately in relation to the expectations of the National Curriculum. This is raising teachers' awareness of what levels their pupils should be achieving and hence of the work needed for them to reach these from their present levels of attainment. The recently revised pupil tracking sheets provide teachers with a clear and easily accessible summary of each pupil's context and performance.

The school has continued to build upon recent improvements to systems for checking on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual education plans have been developed to be more 'pupil friendly' and the



targets they contain mean that progress can now be measured more accurately. Teaching assistants have undertaken training in how best to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in lessons to achieve their targets. The impact of this is evident in the way that these pupils' achievement in lessons is improving.

Significant further improvements have been made to the curriculum, particularly in the key areas of improving pupils' writing skills and in developing the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has adjusted its curriculum in order to give a greater emphasis on developing writing skills. Pupils now regularly undertake focused daily writing sessions beyond their usual English lessons. In these short, sharp sessions they isolate and practice individual elements of writing. On a weekly basis, pupils also work on composing extended pieces of writing for different purposes. Some good quality examples of this extended writing were seen in Year 6, for example, when pupils wrote imaginary diary entries from the point of view of Russian soldiers in the Crimean War. The school has put considerable energy and expertise into helping pupils improve their writing. This is becoming evident in improved attainment in writing, especially in Years 5 and 6, and in better progress. Pupils' workbooks provide strong evidence of this and of the good amount of work they are completing. The school recognises the importance of mapping out systematically the opportunities for developing pupils' writing skills across the curriculum but has rightly focused first of all on projects that have a quick and direct impact on improving pupils' writing skills. Hence, an initial project was introduced to maximise the opportunities for writing presented through educational visits. Pupils also report how pleased they are that they are getting the chance to undertake more of these visits.

In other aspects of the curriculum, a stronger focus is evident on pupils becoming actively involved in investigative work. This was seen in both mathematics and science, for example, when pupils in a Year 4/5 class investigated whether or not air has weight. The overuse of worksheets, noted in the previous visit, is becoming much less prevalent, although on occasion, the restricting quality of a worksheet still prevents younger pupils from taking full advantage of the opportunity to develop their writing skills in science.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring greater but realistic challenge in lessons so that the proportion of good or better teaching increases substantially – good
- make better use of assessment information to plan lessons that precisely match pupils' needs and provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work – good
- ensure that the curriculum is planned effectively to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, including those in the resource provision and for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, through outdoor activities – good.



The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at the last monitoring visit. The headteacher, supported well by senior leaders and the chair of the IEB, has shown great resolve in leading the school through a period of much change and disruption culminating in significant staffing changes and class size reductions. In spearheading this work she has accelerated the pace of change and successfully ensured that efforts have been clearly focused on improving the quality of pupils' learning and in raising their achievement. Monitoring records demonstrate that senior leaders have a secure grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and the standards attained by pupils. Decisive action has been taken to redeploy staff and strengthen class teaching. Difficult decisions have been made.

These improvements are helping to strengthen teamwork and increase staff moral as the rewards for their collective hard work are becoming more apparent. Teachers and support staff are working together well. A common philosophy has been established; staff talk the same language and are increasingly confident in making their own decisions and acting on things themselves.

Significant efforts have been made to develop the capacity of middle leaders. This has included extending their roles to lead improvements more directly. They now systematically observe lessons and scrutinise pupils' work in books. Observations of teaching focus routinely on the progress made by pupils in each class and teachers are provided with clear targets to improve their performance. This has greatly increased their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their own subjects and has enabled them to provide valuable feedback to teachers about how to improve.

The IEB continue to provide effective support to the school. They remain forthright in their desire to see the school improve further by challenging and supporting the school to the point where capacity within the school is self-sustaining. Plans are underway to train the shadow governing body to assume responsibility for governing the school in the near future.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, check rigorously on the quality of the school's work and take decisive action to improve it – good.



External support

The local authority (LA) continues to support the school well through the work of the School Improvement Partner, specialist advisers and local authority consultants. There is clear agreement on the agenda for improving the school. Overall, time given by local authority officers to support the school has reduced as the school's capacity to manage its own improvement has increased. The local authority has provided high levels of support to the school to tackle important and complicated staffing issues.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning in Years 1 to 4.
- Improve the balance in lessons between teacher-led and independent learning activities.