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Miss Lindsey Taylor
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Taylor

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Broadlands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1–2 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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 – satisfactory.

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 Herefordshire.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Additional inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Broadlands Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, governors responsible for management and safeguarding, and a representative from the local authority who is also the School Improvement Partner.

Context

Since the last visit there has been a considerable restructuring of classes as a result of staff redundancy and falling pupil rolls.

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

There was a significant upturn in national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2009 in English, mathematics and science. These results were the highest overall in the school for four years, and reflect very positively on the work undertaken during the last year to improve standards by school staff, pupils and leaders. Given that the cohort who took these tests had slightly weaker attainment on entry into Key Stage 2 than pupils in previous years, the results also represented a marked improvement in pupils' progress. Attainment nonetheless remains low and while pupils' progress has improved, it remains weak, especially for middle-attaining boys. The school's own data for pupil progress show that underachievement remains a concern throughout Key Stage 2, especially in Year 5. Attainment is broadly average at Key Stage 1. At both Key Stages, national assessments and tests for 2009 confirmed significant improvements in standards of writing, although standards remain low, and securing improvements in writing skills remains the key priority for the whole school.

The Year 6 national test results for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities confirmed that they made satisfactory progress across Key Stage 2 and in this regard performed better than other groups of pupils. The progress of these pupils, and that of other groups requiring additional support such as the growing number of children arriving in the school at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language, is closely monitored. Packages of additional support for these pupils are carefully tailored to their needs, and draw very effectively on partnerships with parents and external agencies.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and increase rates of progress for all pupils, particularly in writing in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory.



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour has improved further. In nearly all lessons seen during this monitoring inspection, behaviour was good, and the distracted, off-task behaviour associated with weaker teaching seen in previous monitoring inspections has largely been eliminated. Pupils themselves say that behaviour and relationships throughout the school have got better as tasks and activities in and outside of lessons have become more interesting and enjoyable. As a consequence, they say that incidents of bullying have been reduced and are now rare. Pupils are polite and courteous around school. Those not involved in lunchtime clubs organise their own games in groups on the playground, but there is a shortage of recreational equipment available during the lunch break to keep them fully occupied.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to strengthen, and the school's monitoring of lessons shows an increasing proportion of good teaching. No inadequate lessons were observed during this monitoring inspection, as pupils were able to achieve their objectives for the lesson in well-planned and well-managed lessons. Increasingly, pupils are involved in defining the specific objectives for the lesson following discussion with the teacher, and this helps to make their engagement in tasks clear and purposeful. Lessons now typically feature lively, engaging and often practical approaches to subjects. Attainment in science continues to improve as teachers use a good range of resources to ensure that learning is increasingly 'hands on', such as when Year 2 pupils tested a range of materials for electrical conductivity.

The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is now generally accurate and reliable, as a result of much focused work by teachers on developing this skill, with the support of local authority consultants. In the majority of classes, teachers' marking of pupils' work is now consistently strong, so that pupils know how well they have done and what steps they need to take to improve to meet their targets. In some classes, pupils are encouraged to respond to the teacher's comments, and this ensures that they are understood and acted upon. However, pupils' individual targets are not always reviewed and revised regularly enough to ensure that they get harder as pupils improve, and so they are not always consistently challenging. Where marking of books is less rigorous and regular, a minority of pupils, especially boys, allow standards of presentation and accuracy to slip.

In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers are increasingly effective in stressing to pupils the importance of carrying through basic rules and skills into all of their work, such as effective punctuation. Too often, however, in other subjects or topics in the curriculum, opportunities are lost to encourage pupils to apply and develop their basic skills through, for example, writing in different forms or reading and researching information from sources.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good and better, making sure that assessments are accurate and that pupils' work is always matched well to their differing learning needs – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and governors have not flinched from taking difficult decisions to address the school's large budget deficit and turn around the decline in standards. The upturn in attainment in Year 6 test results is a strong indicator that the measures put in place are having a positive effect. Approved building programmes to improve the accommodation for Early Years Foundation Stage and out-of-school provision, together with the arrival of a children's centre on site, all indicate a school moving ahead with renewed confidence. A much larger than expected intake into the Nursery and Reception classes in September also suggests a renewed confidence in the school from the local community. The school is being given clear and calm direction by the headteacher, who has been steadily building and developing relationships with parents and partners in the local community. Such partnerships yield benefits to pupils, for example in deploying the help of students from local colleges as classroom assistants and volunteer readers.

Senior and subject leaders have responded well to the priority set out in the last monitoring letter to develop their capacity for evaluating teaching and learning. They have been much involved in observing colleagues in the classroom and scrutinising pupils' work, so that they are able to more readily identify the strengths and weaknesses of practice across the school. Their ability to use data to identify where additional support is needed has been transformed. However, this capability has been built up from a very low base, and there is still a need to develop this capacity further, especially to enable leaders to 'drill down' to monitor, evaluate and develop the performance of specific groups of pupils across the school.

Governors are actively engaged in the processes of school improvement. They have identified clear priorities and plans for improving their effectiveness, and have been pro-active in meeting with parents to elicit their views on how to take the school forward. They recognise the need to ensure that all required policies are in place and relevant to securing effective provision for pupils. The appointment of a governor in charge of the safeguarding of pupils' welfare ensures that the school's procedures in this area are secure and that the school responds effectively to concerns.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels, establishing a greater sense of urgency and ensuring that actions are evaluated rigorously against pupils' rates of progress and the standards they achieve – good.

External support

The support of the local authority has been much valued throughout the school, and effective in helping the school to raise standards. The school improvement partner has been particularly effective as 'critical friend' to the school, offering support and encouragement but sharply drawing attention to shortcomings. Meetings of the 'Project Team' are effective in holding the school and local authority to account for their part in the school's development.

Priorities for further improvement

- Use performance data to identify more sharply any gaps in achievement between groups of pupils in the school; identify reasons for such gaps and produce action plans to address these.