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23 October 2009

Mr S Cox  
Brownhills West Primary School  
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Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS8 7LA

Dear Mr Cox

Special measures: Monitoring inspection of Brownhills West Primary School

Following my visit with Mary Davis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 October 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 March 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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Brownhills West Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 October 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher, the mathematics coordinator (who is also the designated person for safeguarding), the assessment and science coordinators, the assistant headteacher, the chair of governors, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

The deputy headteacher will not be returning to the school. He has resigned his post, and this will take effect from 31 December 2009. In the week beginning 19 October 2009, the governors and headteacher are holding interviews to recruit a new deputy headteacher. The assistant headteacher joined the school on 1 September 2009, on a temporary one-term contract.

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

The unvalidated results of the 2009 national tests for 11-year-olds show a very positive picture. The proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the level expected for their age in English, mathematics and science is expected to be above the national figure, particularly in writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 1, the results of teachers' assessments for seven-year-old pupils show that their attainment is generally in line with what is expected for their age.

The school's most recent assessment information shows that in nearly all year groups, pupils' achievement is at least satisfactory and in some cases good, for example in Years 5 and 6. While the school has been successful in tackling underachievement, pockets of lower performance remain. At the end of the summer term 2009, pupils' attainment in Years 3 and 4 was below average in writing. Rates of progress for these pupils, although gradually improving, remained slow, particularly in Year 4 in reading and writing. Nevertheless, as a result of better teaching, these pupils who are now in Years 4 and 5 are making faster progress. The gap between what they are expected to achieve and what they are currently attaining is closing rapidly.

Most pupils really enjoy their learning, particularly when they are challenged to do better and improve on their previous best work. This was shown in a mathematics lesson in Year 6, where careful planning ensured that all pupils made good progress, speaking enthusiastically about calculating degrees in an angle and solving challenging problems.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and more particularly in science, where they are very low – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The pupils' behaviour is good. They have positive attitudes and enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their good attendance. They are eager to talk about their work, extremely welcoming to visitors and unfailingly good humoured. Relationships are exceptionally positive and pupils feel safe and well cared for.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved significantly. It ranges from good to satisfactory, with none that is inadequate. As a result of the improvements in teaching, pupils' learning is more meaningful and progress is more rapid than previously. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, poetry was used skilfully by the teacher to improve pupils' spoken and written language. Teachers' planning has improved further, and there is a rigorous focus on ensuring that the needs of different ability groups are met in lessons. This means that pupils enjoy their work more because it has greater relevance and is helping them acquire new skills and knowledge more rapidly than in the past. The higher attaining pupils are benefiting particularly from this approach, which is shown by the significant proportion of Year 6 pupils who reached the higher Level 5 in the 2009 Key Stage 2 tests.

Teachers' marking is mostly good and generally consistent. Pupils receive helpful written advice about improving their work and what to do next in order to eliminate weaknesses. In the best lessons, assessment is used effectively to move pupils to the next level in their learning, and acquire new skills. Targets are set for all pupils but there is some variability in how well teachers' marking is linked to the targets, and in the pupils' understanding of how they might achieve them.

There is a wide range of accurate assessment information available to all teachers, who are using it more effectively to plan lessons and identify intervention strategies for different groups of pupils, for example those on the school's register of special educational needs. Pupils' progress is tracked systematically and rigorously, ensuring that any gaps in learning can be tackled quickly. Teachers' weekly planning identifies the steps pupils need to take in order to achieve the next level in their learning, and shows how new skills and knowledge will be taught.

Significant improvements have been made in the quality of provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nursery and Reception children are enjoying opportunities to plan and work together, which is clearly benefiting both groups of

children. The learning environment in the Reception class is much improved and provides a range of stimulating activities and areas, as well as opportunities for more structured learning.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, so that teachers have higher expectations of all pupils, particularly the more able – good.
- Ensure teachers have the assessment information they need to build on pupils' previous achievement and learning successfully – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, with the effective support of other senior teachers, continues to drive the school forward. Significant improvements have been made since the last monitoring inspection, and the school is well placed to consolidate the improvements by embedding its ambitions for further success. Monitoring arrangements are rigorous and systematic. There are frequent checks on teachers' planning, pupils' books and lessons. The outcomes of these activities are used carefully to inform future plans, deploy resources and identify interventions that raise standards and pupils' achievement.

The chair of governors continues to provide good leadership to the governing body, who maintain a watchful eye on the school's progress. Governors have become more adept at holding the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils and are determined that past weaknesses should not occur again.

The headteacher has recently carried out a survey of parents to find out their views about the school. Almost 50% of families responded, and all of the responses were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education provided.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, and ensure leaders at all levels evaluate the school's work more rigorously and drive school improvement more urgently – good

External support

The local authority has extended the range of support available to the school. Since the last inspection, a local authority consultant has been instrumental in bringing about significant improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's improvement adviser has ensured that monitoring and evaluation remain high priorities and has skilfully worked alongside senior teachers to improve their leadership and management skills.