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3 December 2009

Mrs Stephanie Tasker
Headteacher
Pinehurst Primary School
Pinehurst Avenue
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Merseyside
L4 7UF

Dear Mrs Tasker

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pinehurst Primary School

Following my visit with Anna Dawson, additional inspector, to your school on 1 and 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 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 Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Liz Godman
Lead inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Pinehurst Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection in June 2009, the responsibilities of the senior leaders for different aspects of the school's work have been clarified. A new teacher has joined the school staff and two teachers are currently on maternity leave. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have recently moved into a new purpose-built extension. Following refurbishment of the school building, these children and pupils in Key Stage 1 moved onto the present site in September 2009.

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

There are still too many occasions in lessons where pupils' progress is restricted by a slow pace and low expectations about the quality and quantity of work completed. In these lessons, for example, pupils have insufficient time to practise and apply their skills in writing. Similarly, pupils' progress in acquiring and using skills in numeracy is also slow. Where pupils are in mixed-age classes there is sometimes little sign of any increased challenge for the older pupils, thus limiting their progress. This picture is confirmed by the work in pupils' books. In many classes, pupils produce too little work which is poorly presented. The exception is in Year 6, where there are more signs of independent research and evidence of a wider range of purposes for writing. In these pupils' books, the care taken with handwriting and presentation and the amount of work produced are a clear indication of improvement. However, these signs of increasing progress are not consistent throughout the school. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the progress that pupils are making in each class and have started to bring about changes to the quality of teaching to improve this. However, it is too soon to see the effects of this on an overall improvement in learning and progress. Consequently, pupils continue to have too much ground to make up and their attainment remains low.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – inadequate



Other relevant pupil outcomes

Overall levels of attendance have improved because of successful strategies employed by the school. However, there are still too many pupils who are persistently absent. The school has identified this and is taking robust action to tackle it. Pupils are not yet well equipped for future learning due to their continuing weak skills in literacy and numeracy. There are also insufficient opportunities for pupils to use these skills and to show independence in learning. However, in the main, pupils' behaviour continues to improve in and around school. There is sometimes restlessness when interest wanes, but in a number of lessons, there are also signs of increasingly positive attitudes and motivation to learn. These changes provide a sound basis for accelerating pupils' progress. Pupils' growing commitment to adopting a healthy lifestyle is enhancing their readiness to learn. Their gains in understanding of how to stay safe and the greater care they take of one another is also contributing to pupils' increased confidence in school.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise attendance to at least the levels expected of similar schools – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

Since its recent relocation, the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is not sufficiently well organised. The school recognises the need to attend to the planning and organisation of activities to better meet individual children's assessed needs. There is also an understanding of the urgency required to improve the quality of the learning environment, indoors and outside, in order to give children a sound start in their learning and development.

In the school as a whole, there has been a decrease in the proportion of lessons where teaching is inadequate, although there remains too much barely satisfactory teaching for pupils' progress to accelerate as rapidly as is necessary. Although the degree of challenge for some pupils has increased, overall expectations remain low and too often the pace of lessons is slow and so time is wasted. Lesson planning shows improvement as all teachers now use a consistent approach and the objectives for the lesson are clearly displayed and explained. Consequently, pupils are clear about what they are supposed to learn in the lesson. Generally, behaviour continues to be managed well, but on the occasions when the pace of the lesson drops, pupils' attention wanders. The contribution made by support assistants to the progress of individual pupils is improving. However, because they do not have regular access to the teacher's planning, support assistants are not consistently clear about their role in the lesson nor are they always deployed to best effect.



Assessment is increasingly accurate, but is not used well enough in all lessons to challenge pupils and to raise their achievement. Teachers do set longer-term individual targets with a degree of challenge, which most pupils understand. However, in general, there is no reference to these in lessons. As a result, pupils still do not know how well they are progressing towards their individual targets for the term or when they have achieved them. There continue to be missed opportunities for pupils to assess for themselves how close they are to their targets. Work is now marked regularly and guidance is usually given on how to improve, but the detail and quality of this varies, as do signs that pupils have responded to this feedback. However, there are emerging pockets of better practice in some classes. Pupils are beginning to understand success criteria agreed for the whole class for a lesson and so to recognise whether they have achieved what was intended for that particular lesson. Occasionally, pupils are involved in formulating these success criteria, but their use is neither secure nor consistent.

Curriculum planning is improving and has a closer focus on developing the skills of literacy and numeracy. There is a better balance in curriculum provision to give pupils increased opportunities to use their skills in different subject areas, although this varies between classes. A range of extra-curricular activities contributes to improved opportunities for pupils to practise skills and to develop their interests. Themed work is also making learning more interesting and enabling pupils to see links between subjects. However, this is inconsistent and opportunities to extend the learning of higher attainers remain limited, as do those for pupils to research, to develop their own ideas and to write at length.

Care, guidance and support continue to meet pupils' needs appropriately. Partnerships with different agencies are improving. As a result, there is more rapid identification and better support for those who are at risk of becoming vulnerable. A learning mentor, who will work with individual pupils and their families to tackle the problem of persistent absence, took up post a few days before this monitoring inspection. This indicates the understanding the school has of the relationship between attendance and attainment and the emphasis it is now putting on this very important area.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that the overall quality of teaching and learning is at least good throughout the school, thus eradicating inadequate teaching – satisfactory
- Adapt the curriculum so that it better meets pupils' needs and develops their basic literacy and numeracy skills – satisfactory
- Ensure that marking and academic guidance consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their work – satisfactory



The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's self-evaluation has improved since the inspection in June 2009. There is now an accurate understanding, shared between senior leaders and governors, of the quality of the school's work. Plans for improvement are sharply focused on the key weaknesses and are giving a better steer to all staff as to what needs to be done to rectify these. The headteacher has taken firm and positive steps which are starting to improve teaching and the curriculum. Staff are starting to respond to these actions, but this work is at an early stage of implementation. As a result, there is not yet the necessary improvement in pupils' progress and attainment. Progress with the implementation of plans for improvement is monitored closely and there is a clear understanding of how much more there is to be done. The school's leaders have generated a shared determination among staff and governors to succeed in securing the necessary improvements in the school's work. Senior leaders are starting to take responsibility for their newly allocated roles and this is beginning to improve teaching and to raise attendance, for example. Subject leaders are also new to their roles and so have not had sufficient time to bring about improvements in their subjects. Governors now have a very clear view of the school's areas for improvement. They are starting to use their particular skills and expertise to discharge their responsibilities and to hold the school to account.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of school self-evaluation in order to hold leaders, managers and governors to account for improving pupils' achievement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements and provides a secure basis for support for the school's improvement. Regular visits from the senior School Improvement Officer have aided the rigorous evaluation of progress and have kept actions on track. Good guidance and support from the local authority's consultants are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to better meet children's needs and to increase their rates of progress in relation to each of the areas of learning.

