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Mrs Emma Walford
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Dear Mrs Walford

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Robin Hood Junior School

Following my visit with Gail Robertson, additional inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 March 2010, 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 second 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Sutton.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Robin Hood Junior School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and spoke with the headteacher, staff, pupils, parents, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

This monitoring inspection focused on the two areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, which relate to achievement, teaching, leadership and management. It did not inspect other pupil outcomes.

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

The school has placed particular emphasis on raising standards in writing and has done so successfully. In Years 5 and 6, pupils' work and the school's records show that the majority of pupils are now making faster progress in writing. They are using these skills effectively in other subjects such as science and religious education. Work in lessons reflects the improved attainment and the wide spread within each class, which includes pupils whose attainment is above national expectations. Although overall standards in comparison to national averages in writing are still behind those in reading and mathematics, the school's records show that Year 6 pupils are on track to at least meet national standards in each of these subjects at the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5. If the current rate of improvement in Year 5 continues, the school's records show that these pupils are also on track for similar attainment by the end of Year 6. In other years, attainment is improving, but is still below national expectations in some areas. At the next monitoring inspection, the evidence from the school's data and pupils' work on their attainment, progress this year and overall progress during the key stage for all year groups will be significant elements in evaluating the extent to which previous underachievement has been redressed and the school has made progress on this area for development.

Pupils join in with discussions more assuredly and their writing is increasingly perceptive. Staff have very effectively raised the confidence of Year 6 pupils of all attainment levels in reading to their peers. Across the whole school, there have been improvements in spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation but there is more to do. In Years 5 and 6, improvements have been more rapid than in other years, where some errors arise frequently, such as names beginning with lower case letters. In mathematics, progress and attainment are improving but there are occasions in lessons when some pupils make little progress, because the work is not matched closely enough to their needs or does not focus sufficiently on

understanding. Sometimes higher attainers are not challenged by hard enough work while on other occasions lower attainers are not involved well enough or are unsure how to proceed.

Progress made by pupils in booster and intervention groups has improved, but there remains some variability. The school has moved some support back into classrooms where it deems this to be more effective. Pupils who are a special focus for improvement within the main teaching class are making better progress, although this varies across year groups.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching and learning through:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring assessment data are used to plan lessons that challenge all learners, particularly the higher-attaining pupils – good

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching is improving and has led to pupils making faster progress. Teachers work together effectively, planning lessons across a year group with clear learning objectives and different tasks for various ability groups. They choose activities that make lessons enjoyable, and sometimes humorous.

Targets on the basics, such as punctuation and multiplication tables, are focusing planning, teaching and assessment more on these important areas and leading to improvements. Talking is being used more effectively to set the scene for writing. Lessons are providing more opportunities for extended writing in other subjects, in which the use of literacy targets and marking against them is developing. Parents welcomed the recent curriculum morning on writing, aimed at helping them support their children's learning.

Teachers are modelling methods more carefully and providing examples on wall displays so pupils can follow them more successfully. In mathematics, these steps for answering questions often do not develop pupils' understanding or reasoning well enough so some pupils find it hard to use the methods to solve slightly different problems. Teachers display success criteria clearly so pupils know what they are aiming for. In mathematics, these sometimes mirror the steps in the method without clarifying the extent of understanding that pupils need to demonstrate. Pupils are more involved in making assessments against learning objectives for the lesson, although sometimes the value of this is limited by time or quality of success criteria. Marking of pupils' work is better but does not consistently show pupils how to improve.

The quality of teaching remains varied. Support from the local authority has been focused on the key areas for development, in which there has been improvement. The pockets of teaching in which pupils make least progress are those in which the work has not been planned precisely enough to meet their needs or to encourage them to think; it may be too easy or too hard for some or leave them listening for too long. Some of these instances occur in parts of class lessons and others within small group interventions.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders and staff continue to work together well with a strong commitment to improvement. Their hard work has yielded results.

Following training and support, staff have become increasingly confident and accurate in assessing pupils' writing against National Curriculum levels, using both tests and ongoing assessment. Training to broaden this approach to mathematics has been deferred until next term. Through pupil progress meetings, teachers have deepened their understanding of tracking data for their year group and taken greater responsibility for the performance of each of their pupils. The literacy and mathematics coordinators know well the performance in each year group. The special educational needs coordinator has worked effectively with teachers to improve the quality of individual education plans, which are positively affecting the planning of lessons and support for pupils with special educational needs.

Lessons observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher were evaluated accurately and appropriate areas for development were identified. This term, senior leaders have observed all teachers in both literacy and mathematics, and some small group sessions, but not all interventions. The literacy and mathematics coordinators have been trained in observing lessons and have begun to do this. Where senior leaders have identified areas for improvement, local authority support has been targeted and impact already seen. However, there is no synthesis of individuals' areas for development and improvement on them over time so that continuous improvement can be supported more consistently.

The literacy and mathematics coordinators have a more secure oversight of the provision and its impact in their subject areas as a result of monitoring of planning and pupils' work. Their evaluations have contributed to subsequent improvements, such as in planning different work for each attainment group during the initial brief activity in lessons. Coordinators for other subjects have made evaluations, for example through monitoring planning or pupils' work. Local authority support for science has commenced and steps are being taken towards broader assessment in the subject.

Attainment data and tracking are used more effectively at individual pupil level to identify those in each class who have not made the expected progress overall since

joining the school, but this information is not aggregated to provide an overview of progress during the key stage and the extent to which any previous underachievement has been redressed. Neither is there a summary of overall progress for those who join the school without a Key Stage 1 result. Senior leaders have used results from the end of term assessment period to identify the progress made in each booster and intervention group, and used this to amend provision. There is a need to observe all small group teaching and monitor pupils' work more frequently so that appropriate support may be given and progress accelerated more immediately. The system for recording provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved; there is potential to adapt this to provide a long-term record of all pupils for whom interventions have been given.

The improvement plan for this term has focused successfully on actions to raise attainment and progress. There has been less emphasis on the specific aspects of teaching and of leadership and management identified as areas for development at the last inspection, such as strategic plans with specified outcomes for pupils.

Governors have discussed and questioned pupils' attainment and progress at their standards committee meeting, although they have not reviewed the school's progress against each section of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They have sought to act upon the points raised at the previous monitoring visit to increase the sharpness of evaluation and are requesting some more evidence. They have recently produced questionnaires to collect first-hand information from parents and staff, and a governor has met with the school council. The literacy governor has also met with the literacy coordinator.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure leaders at all levels:
 - evaluate accurately the work of the school
 - develop strategic plans that focus on outcomes for the pupils
 - pursue improvement relentlessly and rigorously by systematically monitoring all aspects of the work of the school to ensure improvement plans are implemented
 - develop a secure oversight of their subject areas, undertake thorough analysis of all available performance data and are held fully accountable for their responsibilities – good

External support

Staff have found the support from the local authority helpful. It has been effective in raising teachers' expectations and understanding of how provision and outcomes can be improved. The literacy and mathematics coordinators have received support from the local authority on observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work that has developed their management and teaching skills. Support for science leadership has begun. Training for teachers and teaching assistants for planning and teaching

intervention groups has had some impact but more is needed in this area and for the group of target pupils in class lessons. There is room for a closer focus of support and monitoring on improving specific aspects of teaching rather than overall measures of quality.