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15 March 2010

Mrs Jane Gornell
Headteacher
Old Hall Drive Primary School
Old Hall Drive
Gorton
Manchester
M18 7FU

Dear Mrs Gornell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Old Hall Drive Primary School

Following my visit with Shirley Herring, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 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 July 2009. 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

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Old Hall Drive Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 March 1020

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work. They visited 19 lessons. They also scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team; groups of pupils, including members of the school council; groups of parents and carers, including over 40 who attended a specially arranged meeting on the second day of the monitoring inspection; a number of governors; and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The school is in the process of recruiting a deputy headteacher. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed for the summer term; she will take up her post after Easter. There have been a number of staffing changes since the first monitoring inspection. These include new leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

The school's systems for tracking how well pupils are progressing in their learning continue to develop and provide leaders with a wealth of information about where intervention and support is required. However, this information is still not consistently used to plan learning opportunities which more closely meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, there is little difference in the rate of pupils' learning and progress than at the time of the July 2009 inspection. Pupils' work in books and lessons observed during this monitoring inspection confirm this rate of progress.

The school's analysis of the current Year 6 pupils points to them attaining broadly average standards by the time they leave. This would be an improvement on last year's results.

Other relevant outcomes for pupils

The improvement in pupils' overall behaviour noted during the first monitoring visit is being sustained. Pupils, and parents and carers, continue to be positive about behaviour in and around school. Inspectors saw many good examples and no evidence of bullying or incidents of a racist or sexist nature. Behaviour in the classroom has improved with fewer lessons disrupted because of low-level chatter. However, there is still too much of this and, where it occurs, learning is interrupted.

Pupils who spoke to inspectors again reported they are enjoying school. This is now better reflected by their attendance which, while low, is improving. They are developing confidence in the roles they have in school, for example as members of



various councils and teams. In addition, they are making positive contributions to the wider community, for example through their adoption of the local railway station for which, alongside an artist and a neighbouring high school, they will design posters.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' behaviour and eliminate all aspects of bullying and incidents of a racist and sexist nature – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

For the second successive monitoring inspection no inadequate teaching was observed. This is most welcome. However, the school has a more positive view than inspectors of the quality of teaching. While the school has extended the range of observations, the focus of these when judging the quality of lessons is still too much on what teachers do rather than what pupils are learning.

The large majority of teaching observed led to pupils making satisfactory progress in their learning. The school knows that if pupils' progress is to accelerate, much more teaching needs to be good or better. Where teaching was good pupils were clear about what they were to learn and do. In a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher used quick-fire questioning well to ensure that pupils understood how to solve problems using decimals. She was then able to set challenging activities for those who did understand which extended their thinking and knowledge. Because the teacher's questioning had pinpointed the pupils whose understanding was less secure, she was able to give them direct, focused tuition geared to their learning needs. As a result, all pupils were actively engaged in the lesson and – including those who were struggling – made good progress in their learning. Such strengths in teaching remain inconsistent across the school. In the satisfactory lessons pupils often spend too much time listening to the teacher and, as a result, are insufficiently engaged in their learning. In addition, some lessons are still disrupted by low-level chatter or inattentiveness. The quality of marking in literacy has been enhanced by a concerted effort to ensure greater consistency. This has been successful with the result that marking in this subject is helping to move pupils on to the next step of learning. This consistency and quality is not a feature of marking in mathematics although leaders have plans to rectify this.

Overall provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the first monitoring inspection. Previous concerns regarding aspects of cleanliness and the welfare requirements have been resolved.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the proportion of good teaching so that the improvements in achievement are sustained and standards rise – satisfactory



The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders, staff and governors remain determined to secure improvement. They have been successful in several areas, for example the following.

- Areas of concern raised in the first monitoring inspection, particularly around the Early Years Foundation Stage, have been resolved.
- There is a more consistent approach to the implementation of school policies. Midday assistants are clear about lunchtime arrangements and communicate these well to the pupils.
- Good work continues in the promotion of community cohesion with pupils involved with other schools in projects such as 'Eyes on the Community'.

Nonetheless, the overall quality of the school's risk assessments is variable. They do not always identify what the risk may be, what measures have been put into place to control the risk and how effective such measures have been.

Relations with parents and carers continue to improve with courses and sessions regularly provided for them. Those who attended the parents' meeting with an inspector were generally positive about the way the school communicates with them and the way the school listens to their views. A few raised concerns of a general nature but, overall, they are happy with the standards their children attain and most were happy with the improvements in children's welfare. This is demonstrated well by the unanimous response to the statement: 'My child is safe at school,' with which all 112 parents and carers who had responded to the school's questionnaire by the end of the first day of the monitoring inspection agreed. This is a significant improvement.

Good progress has also been made in improving systems for recording incidents and complaints. The school can now point to a reduction of incidents and accidents in Key Stage 2 breaks and lunchtimes. From this information the school is aware that more needs to be done to enable Key Stage 1 pupils to understand more readily what is expected of them at these times. Complaints from parents and carers are now tracked more thoroughly and resolutions are evident.

Despite improvements since the first monitoring inspection, the overall capacity of the school to sustain these improvements is fragile. This is because the headteacher is carrying too much responsibility herself. Leadership elsewhere in the school is developing but the headteacher currently lacks opportunities to test her own sound judgements and leadership against another senior professional skilled in understanding whole-school issues. The governors and the local authority are optimistic that the appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher will address this but recognise there is an urgency to provide such opportunities now.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of procedures and policies for welfare, child protection, equal opportunities and community cohesion to make sure that they are having the desired impact – satisfactory



- Ensure that parents' and carers', and pupils', views are taken into account when evaluating the school's performance – good
- Improve systems for recording incidents and investigating parents' and carers' complaints and ensure that the outcomes are monitored rigorously – good

External support

The local authority continues to provide helpful support for the school. It agrees with inspectors that the improvements shown, welcome as they are, can be sustained only when the leadership capacity of the school is enhanced.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the priorities for further improvement identified in the first monitoring visit are fully addressed
- all risk assessments make clear what risks are identified, how they are to be controlled and how effective the measures taken have been.

To enhance the sound leadership of the headteacher and to build up the school's wider capacity to sustain current and secure further improvement, governors and the local authority should:

- provide regular opportunities for the headteacher to engage in regular discussion with another senior professional skilled in understanding whole-school issues.