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Mr C Toye
The Headteacher
Vauxhall Primary School
Vauxhall Street
London
SE11 5LG

Dear Mr Toye

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Vauxhall Primary School

Following my visit with Thomas Gibson to your school on 10 and 11 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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 be appointed subject to contact and discussion with HMI.

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 Lambeth.

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Vauxhall Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work over two days, scrutinised documents and met the executive headteacher, a range of senior and middle managers, pupils from the school council, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. A range of school documents was scrutinised. Pupils were observed at break times and generally around the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection the school has formed a soft federation with a nearby primary school for three years. The headteacher of this school has become the executive headteacher of both schools. The federation will continue until 2012 and be subject to review in 2011.

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

Inspection and school evidence points to children's knowledge and skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage as being well below the age-related expectations. The 2009 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results demonstrate that pupils attained standards that were well below national expectations in mathematics and science. In the Early Years Foundation Stage this is still wholly the case in all areas of learning. Across the rest of the school, pupils' progress is starting to lift. Some teachers are now displaying a clear focus on the need to accelerate pupils' progress. Greatest progress is made by pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 where teaching is consistently strong. This practice is not yet widespread and consequently progress is slower in other year groups.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and generally are keen to learn. They are friendly and polite and relationships are good. Most behave well in lessons and around the school, but some become restless and disengaged from learning when teaching is not active or practical or lessons proceed at too slow a pace.

Progress since the last inspection:

- raise standards in, mathematics and science across the school so that at least 80% of pupils make good or better progress each academic year – satisfactory
- improve behaviour so that it makes a positive contribution to pupils' good learning, ensuring teachers make their expectations explicit and enforce these consistently – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision



At the time of the previous inspection, teaching and learning were inadequate. During this monitoring visit, inspectors observed the vast majority of staff teaching. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, although there are pockets of outstanding practice. In the most effective lessons pupils make good progress and their behaviour is good. Teachers set work that is well matched to the needs of pupils. Good questioning linked to the learning objective and a practical and interactive teaching approach support the good pace of learning. In these lessons pupils feel involved in their learning because they are given a clear idea of what they are expected to learn and achieve by the end of each lesson. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to interest and engage pupils and to check pupils' understanding during the lesson. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson delivered by the acting deputy headteacher, opportunities to develop pupils' enquiry and reasoning skills were fully utilised by ensuring questioning which challenged pupils to articulate how and why things happen. There are some examples of good marking with clear feedback to pupils on how to improve their work, but this practice is not widespread across the school.

In the less effective lessons, teachers are not always skilled in planning learning which challenges pupils in their thinking, and it does not yet enable pupils to take more control of their learning. Pupils are too often all working on the same task, with little differentiation for differing abilities. Tasks are not readily adapted if pupils do not respond as expected. In particular, teachers spend too much time talking, allowing insufficient time for pupils to develop their speaking skills or explore issues for themselves and consolidate their understanding. There is insufficient support for pupils at the various stages of learning English as an additional language. Staff make few concessions to the needs of these pupils. There is insufficient focus on key vocabulary, on explaining terminology or on providing visual props and prompts. Helpful displays and aids for learning, such as word walls, are not referred to consistently during lessons. Although teachers have higher expectations for their pupils, they are not always skilled in modelling the small steps in learning needed to enable pupils to access more difficult work.

Provision and outcomes within the Early Years Foundation Stage remain inadequate and are showing too few signs of improvement. Children now have access to an attractive indoor learning environment and a range of learning resources. However, this is not reflected in the outdoor area. Activities are thoughtfully planned, but opportunities to develop children's language through dialogue are often missed because children have to work independently for too long without sufficient support from adults. Additionally, teaching assistants lack guidance and training as to the purpose behind each learning activity. They cannot pose focused questions in order to challenge children sufficiently, and to develop children's speaking and listening skills. Consequently, the quality of adult interventions is inadequate overall. Although some observations of children's learning takes place, these are often focused on what children are doing, rather than on what they have learned and need to learn in



future. The school's chosen scheme for the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics, is not being implemented with the rigour necessary to ensure that children get a flying start in this essential area. The school must take urgent action to ensure that leadership and provision within this key stage improves significantly before the next monitoring inspection.

Progress since the last inspection:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning as soon as possible so that 80% of it is good or better, particularly with reference to pace and challenge and providing clearer direction to pupils on how to improve their work – satisfactory
- providing more opportunities for pupils to talk about and use and apply their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding – satisfactory
- improve the provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that the principles of good provision in this area are understood, there is a sharp focus on learning, a balance of free choice and teacher-focused activities, and the outdoor area is enhanced to provide good opportunities for children to learn outdoors – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership provided by the executive headteacher is very strong and provides clear direction and purpose. He has quickly established his vision and leads the school with enthusiasm, dedication and a clear commitment to improvement, especially in relation to the progress pupils make. This is beginning to raise staff and pupil morale and increase parent confidence. The many changes in staffing have hindered and slowed the pace of developments in the school. Currently, staffing is stable and the school has worked hard to develop the contribution of middle managers to school improvement. For example, they are now involved more effectively in monitoring the school's work.

Senior leaders have begun to implement a range of potentially useful systems to keep the work of the school under review. For example, the rigorous monitoring of teaching has led to weak practice being challenged. Support provided to remedy weaknesses and the sharing of good practice has successfully raised the overall quality of teaching. A positive start has been made on implementing changes to planning. Regular monitoring of planning is beginning to ensure tasks are more closely matched to the needs of different groups and abilities of pupils, particularly in mathematics and science. The development of a new system for monitoring pupils' progress, together with well-focused support to meet the needs of all pupils, is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, senior leaders acknowledge that the system is in its infancy and there is still some way to go before every pupil is making consistently good progress throughout the school. Additionally, they are aware that training is required to ensure all teachers have a clear understanding of the standards required for each National Curriculum level in order to ensure that the new tracking proves sufficiently robust.



The school improvement plan is well focused on the key issues identified by the previous inspection and identifies appropriate actions to address them. Success criteria are linked well to pupil outcomes but the plan lacks sharpness in procedures for monitoring the impact of actions.

Governors are committed to the improvement of the school and take their responsibilities seriously. They are beginning to hold the school to account for its work, key issue by key issue. Senior leaders and the governors are clear about the challenges facing the school and the steps required to make improvements. Evidence from a small group of parents suggests that, under the new management, pupils feel safe at school, incidences of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with increasingly effectively, there are improvements in communications between home and the school, and, senior leaders are more visible around the school. The school fulfils all requirements to ensure that pupils are safe and secure.

Progress since the last inspection:

- increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and governors in driving through school improvements – satisfactory.

External support

The impact of the implementation of the LA statement of action is currently satisfactory in all key areas except that of improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In this area, the right support and advice is being delivered but the pace of developments remains too slow.