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Thursday 17 June 2010

Dr Tony James
Langley Primary School
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Dear Dr James

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Langley Primary School

Following my visit with Kathleen Campbell, Additional Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 of June 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 September 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

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 Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones
Additional Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Langley Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching in every class at least once, met with pupils and representatives from the governing body and the school improvement partner. Inspectors also reviewed a range of school documentation and looked at work in pupils' books.

Context

There have been no significant contextual changes since the previous visit.

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

The school is now emerging from a period of difficulty and is improving the progress pupils make and attainment in all subjects. There is some consistency with the rate of improvement, which has increased since the previous visit. Pupils enjoy school much more now and have a greater enthusiasm for learning. They are keen to do well and show much commitment to their work.

Standards of attainment remain low across the school but are improving in certain key areas. This is particularly the case in Year 2 and Year 6, where pupils are expected to reach average standards this year. The most significant improvement has been in attainment in mathematics and science where the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is increasing. Writing remains weak in both key stages. The levels of writing skills in most years are low, especially among the boys. Too few of the more-able pupils reach higher levels in their writing as a result of the low expectations of some teachers. The attention to literacy skills in some classes is improving standards of writing but there are some ongoing concerns about the quality of writing in subjects other than English. The quantity of work produced is improving and is closer to what is expected. However, progress for some pupils is hampered by weak handwriting skills.

In mathematics, a focus on core number skills, including learning both traditional and less traditional methods of calculation, is also beginning to increase the rate of pupils' progress. Pupils of all ages are becoming more comfortable using mental arithmetic and most have a secure grasp of simple calculation, including multiplication facts and division. Increasingly, pupils are able to apply these developing skills to solve a range of problems, although occasionally pupils do not have sufficient access to practical apparatus to support learning.

The new marking policy, introduced last term, helps to engage pupils in their learning by explaining what they need to do next to improve. However, improvements in marking are better in English books than in other work and there



some variation from class to class. Lesson planning has been refined to increase pupils' awareness of the learning objectives in lessons and, increasingly, they are involved in assessing aspects of their own work.

The school's 2010 national test predictions for pupils in Year 6, if achieved, would mean that over 70% of pupils would reach standards expected for their age. The school is reasonably confident that these levels will be reached. The good systems of regularly tracking pupils' progress, coupled with targeting for those falling behind, support leaders' and managers' views that the school is improving. These test results would be a significant improvement on previous years, but are within grasp.

Provision for acquiring literacy and numeracy skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve. Changes introduced as a result of a review of practice are having a positive impact on motivating all pupils, and boys in particular. Improvements also include a more accurate balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Assessment procedures have also improved and provide staff with a more accurate picture of progress. The school recognises the need to provide more structure to outdoor learning, ensuring greater purpose for child-initiated activities.

- Increase the rate of progress made by pupils in reading, writing, mathematics and science so that 80% make significant improvement each year – satisfactory
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, increase the progress made by children by providing them with more structured opportunities to acquire literacy and numeracy skills – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

While attendance levels remain low, there has been a promising improvement this year. Currently attendance is at 92% for this academic year, an increase of 3% over last year. The proportion of persistent absentees has also shown a marked decline. This is due in no small part to the work of the learning mentor, who, alongside the headteacher, has developed increasingly positive relationships with some vulnerable families in successfully encouraging better attendance.

Pupils are well behaved and polite. They recognise and appreciate the improved behaviour at the school. In lessons and around the premises, behaviour is generally good and pupils regularly show positive attitudes to learning. There have been no exclusions in this academic year. Behaviour is closely linked to the quality of teaching, with the better behaviour evident in classes where teaching is stronger, more interesting and relevant.

- Raise attendance to 94% and reduce the rate of exclusion – satisfactory



The effectiveness of provision

Teaching, overall, continues to improve. Inspectors observed all classes and almost all lessons were satisfactory with one in three good. Where good learning takes place, teachers set clear learning objectives which pupils understand. Pupils are challenged at an appropriate level according to their needs. Interesting activities are provided, and teaching assistants are used well to support learning. In the less effective lessons, these qualities are not consistently seen and work does not always precisely meet the needs of pupils, especially those who are more able. Sometimes teachers talk for too long, and some lessons do not present pupils with enough challenge.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and managers are continuing to develop their effectiveness, as seen for example, in the improvements to behaviour and attendance. Middle leaders enjoy a greater involvement in identifying and supporting school priorities. As a result of their participation in a wide range of monitoring activities, they are becoming increasingly influential in challenging weaknesses in provision and holding colleagues to account for the progress made by pupils. They have been well supported by the headteacher and his deputy, and together form a team committed to developing a good climate for learning.

Following reconstitution, the governing body are now developing their role. Regular visits to observe the school in action and presentations by staff at governing body meetings are helping them to more effectively challenge school leaders and hold them to account.

The impact of the work achieved this year demonstrates that leaders and managers are developing their capacity to improve. There is a recognition of the further work needed to challenge remaining inconsistencies in provision and to raise expectations for what pupils can achieve. The school has rightly prioritised the development of writing across the curriculum as a focus for improvement.

- Strengthen the school's capacity for sustained improvement – satisfactory

External support

Through the work of the school improvement partner, the local authority provides clear and helpful guidance and support. For example, training in monitoring and feedback has increased the effectiveness of middle leaders in monitoring learning. Senior leaders are appreciative of the good, regular advice and guidance they receive. Financial support has been significant in releasing staff to work together and in improving the provision of interactive whiteboards in classes across the school.



Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of writing to good levels by providing an increased range of good quality writing opportunities across the curriculum.

