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9 July 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 to your school on 7 and 8 July 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 third 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to them receiving a rigorous programme of induction.

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 Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Old Hall Drive Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 July 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the school's senior leadership team, a group of 12 pupils, 30 parents and carers at a specially arranged meeting, representatives from the governing body, a small number of teaching assistants and midday assistants, and representatives from the local authority. The inspector also observed 12 lessons, one in each class.

Context

The school has been successful in appointing a deputy headteacher. He will take up his post in September 2010. In addition, three other teachers will take up posts at the school at the same time.

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

At the time of this monitoring inspection the school had just received the results of the national tests in English and mathematics taken by the current Year 6 pupils. Overall, these as yet un-validated results, point to a welcome rise from last year, although they are likely still to be lower than the national average in both subjects. Also welcome is the rise in writing standards. Standards at the end of Year 2, as indicated by teacher assessments, are broadly similar to last year. At both Year 2 and Year 6, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 and 5 respectively remains low. This is because there is still insufficient and inconsistent challenge for more able pupils across the school. Pupils' work and observations of lessons confirm this.

Senior leaders argue that rates of pupils' learning and progress are improving. They are, but not consistently. The wealth of information the school holds about its pupils is still not used consistently to plan learning opportunities which more closely meet the needs of all pupils. Where it is, such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the progress pupils make is accelerated. The school needs to mark clearly the baseline at which pupils are and ensure teachers take these fully into account when planning lessons which will move pupils on in their learning and development. This is particularly important given the high mobility of pupils evident in the school.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve from one monitoring inspection to the next. Pupils are increasingly proud of their school. Positive relations between pupils were evident throughout this inspection, as was the respect the pupils showed to midday

assistants at lunchtime. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage cooperated very well together both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils' attitudes to school are improving too. A most welcome feature is the sharp improvement in attendance and even sharper reduction in persistent absenteeism. While attendance is still low compared with national averages, it is now only just so. Another welcome feature, reinforcing improved attitudes and behaviour, is the reduction in low-level chatter and disruptions to lessons. More and more so, pupils are demonstrating they are ready for learning. They are, and importantly so are the parents and carers spoken with, confident that bullying and inappropriate behaviour are rare and if they do arise they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Pupils' ability and willingness to contribute to the school and wider community continue to develop well. They play active and well-regarded roles as peer supporters at break and lunchtimes and as members of the school council, Eco-council and healthy school group. Representatives meet with governors and, as well as providing information, challenge them, for example, enquiring when a healthy school governor is to be appointed.

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 – good

The effectiveness of provision

The proportion of good teaching continues to rise slowly. This is because the school has considered what must be done to improve learning more than it has in the past. This work is still developing. In just under half the lessons observed, pupils made good progress in their learning. This was because:

- the focus of the teachers' planning was on what pupils were to learn rather than what teachers and pupils were to do
- activities which were chosen were explained carefully to the pupils, including how, by completing them, their learning would grow
- the questions the teachers and their assistants asked enabled pupils to think about their responses and answer for themselves
- the needs of all pupils, including the more able were catered for
- the learning aimed for in one lesson built well on learning gained in previous lessons
- there was a consistent application of the school's behaviour policy.

The school's leaders are aware that such good lessons need to be commonplace if rates of learning and progress are to improve and standards are to rise. The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a strong role model for this. Here, activities are carefully planned to focus in on what the children are to learn. Open-ended questioning, drawing on previous learning, enabled Nursery children to sound out simple words and Reception children to add single digit numbers together

confidently and correctly. Such questioning was also evident in a Year 5 and 6 science lesson where the pupils built on their knowledge of habitats, such as tundra, to explore how creatures could adapt themselves to different environments.

Pleasingly, in some of the lessons judged to be satisfactory there were examples evident of the good features identified above. In others, however, the focus on learning was still not strong enough and the resulting lack of clarity meant that progress was never better than satisfactory. In a small number of lessons low-level chatter continued to disrupt. This was not because of poor behaviour, but rather that pupils were not engaged because they were unclear and/or insufficiently challenged.

The improvements made in the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage noted at the last monitoring inspection have been maintained. Although not a focus of this inspection, good learning and development opportunities were observed and parents spoken to were very pleased with their children's progress in Nursery and Reception.

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

The headteacher continues to show resilient leadership and her determination, along with that of her leadership team and staff, to secure improvement is commendable. The school has been supported well by the acting deputy headteacher who is leaving at the end of this term. The governors continue to strengthen their strategic overview of the school and have a growing understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Overall confidence within the school is growing as, on balance, is the school's capacity to sustain the improvements made. Two aspects, however, are currently preventing capacity being strong enough to guarantee these improvements. First, the skill of evaluating reasons why progress has or has not been made still lies most strongly with the headteacher. Senior leaders are developing and improving in this area, but their evaluations still rely on what they have done rather than the impact of their actions. Second, the work undertaken to focus teachers on the learning their pupils make is still inconsistent. The observations of lessons undertaken by leaders are variable: the best focus on pupils' learning while others, despite improvements, still do not do so sufficiently.

A sure sign, though, of the overall improvements in leadership and its growing capacity is the good improvement made in four of the five areas identified in the inspection of July 2010. This is demonstrated in the high and increasing levels of confidence pupils, and parents and carers show in the school. All spoken with take the view that the school keeps their children safe, communicates with them well and values their contribution. In discussions they were very complimentary about the efforts and availability of the headteacher, the staff and the family worker. Where

complaints have been made or issues raised, the school has followed these up and records show much improved satisfaction rates at resolution.

Further improvements are evident in the leaders' and governors' work to promote community cohesion. As a result of activities such as a Saturday 'open morning', there has been an increase in the numbers of pupils signing up to external clubs such as kick-boxing and scouting. Pupils doing so are now able to share the benefits of their new found hobbies in school. In addition, stronger links have been established with the police. All-in-all, the school's position in the community is strengthening and it is being viewed in an increasingly positive light.

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

External support

The local authority continues to support and challenge the school well through its effectiveness officers and various consultants. The partnership work to improve attendance has had a positive impact.

Priorities for further improvement

The senior leadership team should strengthen their capacity for sustained improvement and improve pupils' achievement by:

- ensuring their work to sharpen the focus on pupils' learning is put into practice consistently so that;
 - lesson plans and teachers make clear what pupils are to learn
 - greater challenge is provided for more able pupils
- using the wealth of assessment information they hold to;
 - provide an immediate baseline of pupils' starting points
 - ensure receiving teachers take these starting points fully into account when learning opportunities are planned
- measuring the impact of any interventions put into place in terms of the progress pupils make in their learning and development.

Given the good progress the school has made in four of the five areas for improvement and its overall progress since being made subject to special measures, how well the school is progressing against the above priorities will form the main focus of the next monitoring inspection.