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13 May 2010

Mrs E Ford
Headteacher
Bridgewater Primary School
Bridgewater Street
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Manchester
M38 9WD

Dear Mrs Ford

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bridgewater Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 May 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 – 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 the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Salford.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Bridgewater Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 May 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed 12 lessons and undertook extensive observations of the Early Years Foundation Stage; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, the acting assistant headteacher, pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, two teachers were on sickness leave. Of the nine substantive teachers, four are now on sickness leave including the newly appointed deputy headteacher and those who were absent at the time of the previous inspection. The Year 5 teacher has taken on the role of acting assistant headteacher. Of the four classes in Key Stage 2, only the Year 5 class has a substantive teacher. The Interim Executive Board remains in place; the shadow governing body has not yet been formed. The parents' champion role has been replaced by a link parents' post. During this inspection, the Year 6 class was taking national tests and, consequently, was not observed in lessons.

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

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Year 5, there is strong evidence from pupils' books, work seen in lessons, recent reading ages and the school's own assessment data that standards are rising quickly and that pupils are making faster progress than previously. Consequently, standards are moving closer to the national average. In Key Stage 2, in Years 3, 4 and 6, the standards reached by pupils and the progress they make continue to be erratic as a result of absences by staff. The headteacher taught the Year 6 class in the period running up to the national tests and the work in pupils' books over this period shows a marked improvement.

Across the school there has been considerable emphasis on improving pupils' writing. The work in books is generally improved: pupils are producing more work; they are expected to work for longer and achieve more highly. The stronger focus on basic skills, handwriting and presentation is paying dividends. In classes with substantive teachers, pupils' work is well marked with clear pointers for improvement identified. Older pupils are beginning to use assessment criteria to judge their own written work. The greatest improvement has come about through the introduction of a school-wide reading scheme and a systematic programme to teach reading. In a relatively short space of time these and the daily structured

phonics programme have had a very beneficial impact on the standards of pupils' reading and their progress. For example, in Year 2 the profile of pupils' reading has shifted markedly since autumn 2009 when the majority of the 28 pupils in the class were performing at below age-related expectations. In April 2010 all but five of the pupils were reading at or above age-related expectations. Five pupils had reading ages more than three years ahead of their chronological ages and 12 others had reading ages between 12 and 24 months ahead. One important benefit of this improvement, that the school has now recognised, is that it is much clearer to identify pupils with genuine special educational needs and/or disabilities. All groups of pupils, including those entitled to free school meals, boys and those who speak English as an additional language, are making similar gains in their reading.

The previous visit highlighted gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge. The acting assistant headteacher has identified where the gaps are in the school's planning for mathematics and has established a remedial programme for each class to be taught during the start of every mathematics lesson. This visit has identified further weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical vocabulary, for example Year 5 pupils not recognising the terms 'find the difference' or 'what's the difference?' as language for subtraction and Year 2 pupils not being familiar with the term 'how many more than...?'

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the most recent assessments of children's progress, undertaken at Easter 2010, show an increase in the number of children reaching a secure level across all areas of learning compared with the number in summer 2009. The gap in outcomes between boys and girls has been reduced markedly, except in writing. Early calculation is the weakest area both for boys and girls. The benefits to increased progress of the more rigorous approach to teaching phonics, early reading and writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage were evident in the sessions observed. In an outstanding guided reading session with half the Reception class, as part of their topic on 'Growing things', the teacher introduced various packets of seeds and enlarged photocopies of the packs to the children. She challenged them to identify what the packs contained and to see how many words they could read. Without hesitation, the children seized the challenge and immediately began scrutinising the packs, searching for meaning in the text and pictures, recognising simple words and sounding out others. Enjoyment levels were high. All were engaged, excited and motivated by the task, delighting in their realisation that they could read. Several returned to the activity later in the day.

Pupils who met with the inspector reported being happy at school and feeling safe. They recognised the changes that are taking place in school and highlighted the stronger focus on reading and the new reading books as elements they enjoyed, as well as the greater variety of topics being covered in history and science. As on the previous visit, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was very good.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that pupils make much better progress and attain higher standards – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

On this visit, no inadequate teaching was observed; four lessons were good and one was outstanding. The profile of teaching is now satisfactory overall and is improving. Teachers' understanding of what pupils can achieve is rising. The next step for the school is to increase the proportion of good and better teaching.

There have been significant changes to the teaching of reading since the last visit. The school now has a commercial reading scheme which is used across all year groups. Pupils are grouped according to reading age. Those with reading ages below their birthday ages are heard reading every day, by teachers or teaching assistants. Pupils take reading books home and read at home. Books are changed more frequently. Those pupils whose parents and carers do not hear them read are identified and the school arranges for extra reading sessions in school. Group reading sessions are more tightly organised: pupils are grouped together according to reading ages and the sessions take place more frequently. Consequently, the school has made major inroads into the reading deficit reported at the time of the previous visit. Teaching assistants provide invaluable support in this work. There is further training needed for them to carry out the individual and group reading sessions securely.

Since the previous visit much work has been done on the development of the curriculum, led by the Year 5 teacher. The annual plans for the year group are now populated with content detail from the National Curriculum programmes of study and supplemented by a skills programme for each subject. The revised curriculum is being followed by each class. Teachers report that it makes their planning easier and clearer. Work has started on developing creative links across subject areas.

There have been significant improvements in the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Following the previous monitoring visit, the rooms were cleared out, deep cleaned, redecorated and reordered. They are now clean, well maintained, uncluttered and provide a better space for learning and teaching. The outdoor area has been reconfigured, allowing children from both the Nursery and Reception to be outside together. This has freed up one adult to work with small groups. The interior space is better laid out for the continuous provision on offer. The planning and provision for early reading, writing and phonics has been sharpened and work is underway to develop thematic approaches to the curriculum. More needs to be done to strengthen the teaching of early calculation.

The school is cleaner. Corridors and classrooms have been de-cluttered making it easier for them to be cleaned properly.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide strong leadership and very clear direction to the school. She is setting the pace and driving improvements. The school is moving forward on all fronts but its progress is hindered by staffing issues in Key Stage 2. In the absence of the deputy headteacher, the Year 5 teacher has taken on a greater leadership role and is leading on curriculum development. The Reception class teacher is beginning to develop her leadership skills in her role as manager of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Other teachers are more willing to share and develop ideas and take on responsibility for the school's overall standards.

The Interim Executive Board continues to provide good governance and oversight. It works very constructively with the local authority. Together representatives from the board and the local authority meet with parents and carers to keep them informed of the school's progress.

As a result of the work recently carried out, the welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are now met and the school now complies with statutory requirements in respect of its curriculum.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good, robust support to the school, especially through the School Improvement Partner. Recently, the authority arranged for the Reception class teacher to spend a week in the Early Years Foundation Stage of one of its outstanding schools to observe good practice first-hand. Early Years Foundation Stage consultants are supporting the Reception and Nursery staff to develop their provision and practice. Officers from the authority's cleaning services met with caretaking staff at the school to discuss the cleaning routine in the school. The Interim Executive Board draws upon the help of the authority's human resource department for guidance and support with the school's staffing issues.