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Mrs Susan Eriksson
Glenfrome Primary School
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Dear Mrs Eriksson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Glenfrome Primary School

Following my visit with Sheila Boyle, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28 and 29 April 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 November 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for the City of Bristol, and the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Tony Shield
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Glenfron Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 April 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other members of the leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and two groups of pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has retired and an interim headteacher has been appointed. There have been several other changes of teaching staff. A new management structure is being implemented and the school is advertising for a deputy headteacher for September 2010. There have also been a number of new appointments to the governing body.

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

Pupils' achievement remains inadequate overall. Although there is some evidence that pupils are increasingly enjoying their learning, progress is uneven through the school. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils make satisfactory progress in the two Reception classes and satisfactory, sometimes good progress through Years 1 and 2. In Years 3, 4 and 5 progress is improving and is mostly satisfactory. Progress in Year 6 remains inadequate. Many pupils have much to catch up and overall attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains low. Pupils' standards of writing in particular are weak, with pupils in Year 6 still making elementary errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Standards of presentation are often poor.

The school has worked successfully to improve the accuracy and regularity of its assessment practice. The introduction of Assessing Pupils' Progress techniques in particular has brought both rigour and accuracy to the process. As a result, teachers have a more secure and realistic basis on which to measure the progress of individual pupils. The school's most recent performance data confirms a picture of inconsistent progress. No group stands out, but Black African pupils and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language tend to do less well. There is good evidence that some intervention programmes, particularly the reading programmes, are making a difference to the confidence with which pupils read.

Many pupils lack confidence in their ability to achieve and succeed, and give up too easily when they get stuck, lacking strategies to help themselves or each other. At this point attention and concentration can wander. Pupils are sometimes tired and listless, and are not used to taking responsibility for their own learning.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour has improved. At all times during the inspection behaviour was satisfactory and on some occasions, such as during assembly, behaviour was good. Clear procedures for managing behaviour have been implemented, and staff are applying these consistently. Expectations are much higher and pupils understand the consequences of their actions. The emphasis on personal responsibility and on allowing pupils to choose through red, amber and green faces, is having a positive impact. Although some pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, this is well managed. Pupils themselves think that behaviour has improved with nearly seven out of ten pupils in a recent school survey judging behaviour to be good.

Pupils say that bullying is not significant and that adults deal with it quickly and effectively. As a consequence, they feel increasingly safe in school. While the number of exclusions rose initially as the school imposed firmer boundaries, there has been a recent reduction, although the overall level of exclusions is still too high. School records and logs show a reduction in the number of incidents, including those of a racist nature. In general, the school is a harmonious community. The interim headteacher's insistence that pupils are polite and courteous to adults and one another is making a difference to the generally calm and positive atmosphere in school.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to increase pupils' contribution to the school community and their voice is increasingly heard through the elected school council. Assemblies are effective in promoting a sense of community and shared values.

The school's more rigorous approach to promoting good attendance and punctuality and in following up absence is paying dividends, although improvements have not been as rapid as the school would have liked, and overall attendance is still too low. Nevertheless, both attendance and punctuality are steadily improving, as a result of the school's initiatives and promotion of the importance of regular attendance with both parents and pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' personal development and well-being – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching remains inconsistent. While there are signs of improvement, and certainly a determination to improve further, these improvements are uneven,

particularly in Key Stage 2. They are certainly not sufficient to ensure pupils make up for lost ground. The climate for learning in classrooms has improved as a result of higher expectations of behaviour and a consistent implementation of the new behaviour management strategy. As a result, pupils are more confident that they can learn without distraction. Assessment has also improved and is giving teachers and pupils a more realistic picture of attainment. However, there is not yet consistent or effective use of performance data to help modify plans or provide intervention and support for underachieving pupils or additional challenge for those who are coasting. A consistently weak aspect of teaching is the limited attention in lesson planning to ensuring tasks are set to challenge every pupil at their own level. While some teachers use questions well to judge the extent of pupils' understanding, this is not consistent. Nor is questioning used to make pupils think for themselves and articulate their own ideas and feelings.

Changes to the curriculum are being planned and already this is resulting in a more coherently planned experience for pupils. However, there is more to be done before the curriculum inspires an excitement and curiosity in learning, where pupils are encouraged to ask as well as answer questions. The school's commitment to inclusion is clear, but the support in class for pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is not always good enough to ensure they fully understand and make progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve teaching and the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their achievement – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher's ambition is clear. Her expectations and values are made explicit to both staff and pupils, and she has quickly established a strong sense of purpose. She has done exceptionally well to retain the confidence of parents, staff and governors through a difficult period for the school. She has communicated her vision and determination to staff who share her commitment and have relished the opportunities she provides. Staff morale is good. Nevertheless, the capacity of leaders at all levels to take responsibility and drive improvements is limited. Subject leadership is embryonic and while there is satisfactory leadership of literacy, there is no mathematics coordinator. The school recognises the need to develop leadership capacity and support and training are in place. The school's action plan to tackle the areas of weakness identified in the last report is appropriate and effectively prioritised.

Pupil progress meetings are more effective because the school has more reliable performance data and information to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. However, these are at an early stage, and their impact on accelerating pupils' progress is limited. Monitoring lacks rigour and is not yet systematic enough to ensure self-evaluation is rooted in everyday practice. There have been some significant changes among governors and alongside a streamlined committee structure, governors are poised to make a more effective contribution to both supporting and challenging the school. Training and support from the local authority have enabled governors to develop their skills and confidence in carrying out their roles.

The school moved quickly to tackle weaknesses in safeguarding identified at the last inspection. Site security is now much improved and new arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils to and from the school have been put in place. Relevant safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place and all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their responsibilities with regard to child protection.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Embed ambition and drive – inadequate.
- Take immediate action to rectify the weaknesses in procedures for safeguarding pupils so that pupils are kept safe at all times – good.

External support

The local authority has provided satisfactory support tailored to the needs of the school. A consultant has been working with staff to review the curriculum and in developing the leadership skills of key members of staff. In addition, there has been support for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and from the behaviour team to develop additional strategies to minimise challenging behaviour. The support to governors has been particularly effective. The school improvement partner provides satisfactory support. The local authority continues to invest a good deal in the school. The plan of action produced following the last inspection is fit for purpose. Targets are challenging, but achievable.