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Mrs Sarah Malam
Courthouse Green Primary School
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Dear Mrs Malam

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Courthouse Green Primary School

Following my visit with Peter Lawley Additional Inspector, to your school on 12–13 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 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 – inadequate

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed as the school has the capacity to provide sufficient support.

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, Serco, and the Director of Children's Services for Coventry.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Courthouse Green Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 12–13 May 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the senior management team, a group of parents and carers, pupils, governors, a representative from the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching and learning and evaluated a sample of pupils' work.

Context

Since the last inspection two permanent and two temporary teachers have been replaced. Two new governors have been appointed to the governing body. The senior management team has been restructured; two new assistant headteachers joined the team this term. Contractors are working on the school site constructing the new school building with completion scheduled for September 2010.

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

Results in the 2009 Year 6 tests were low in English, mathematics and science. These results were indicative of pupils' very poor prior achievement. The new headteacher, has an accurate view of the progress made by different groups of pupils and has set out resolutely to raise standards as a matter of urgency.

Swift and decisive action has been taken to communicate a strong message to all staff, governors, the local authority and parents and carers that Courthouse Green pupils can and will do better. Improvements in the planning of mathematics and the use of strategies as recommended by national guidance are beginning to have an impact. As a result, most pupils in the majority of classes are now making satisfactory progress in mathematics. The most able mathematicians are not always challenged enough by the learning tasks. Many commented that they find them too easy.

Year 6 pupils are now also making good progress in reading and writing. They benefit from some good teaching in smaller groups for literacy and numeracy with additional good support from teaching assistants. This significant improvement is not yet evident in English across the school because reading and writing are taught as separate entities. This means that writing is not informed by prior reading or by discussion and other talking activities. The quality of the writing suffers as a result and most pupils are still making insufficient progress. Work seen in pupils' books, however, shows that expectations for quantity and productivity have risen. Pupils report that they enjoy activities which make them think and take decisions for themselves, but find some tasks repetitive. In reading, a lack of quality books



matched to pupils' reading levels, inhibits their progress and dampens their enjoyment of reading. Furthermore, the impact of teaching letters and sounds is not evident in the pupils' work which is resulting in less than expected progress in writing.

The quality of data for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities does not support focused teaching or support of this group well enough. The quality and explicitness of detail in their individual education plans is weak. Monitoring of their progress has only been implemented recently, with little evidence of discernable impact.

Although there has been some improvement, particularly in mathematics, this is not yet sufficient to overcome the legacy of past underachievement.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in English and mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2 – inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

'Catching pupils being good' is central to the school's positive ethos and pupils appreciate instant recognition as seen in their wide smiles, warm demeanour and eagerness to please. A group of parents and carers met with inspectors and commented that this approach was adding considerable value to their children's enjoyment of school. In all classes, pupils behaved well and showed good dispositions to learning. In a particularly effective Year 1 lesson, 'expert writers' were bursting with enthusiasm to write their own poems about food to send to the kitchen staff. When pupils have the chance to share their ideas with each other in lessons, they do so thoughtfully and maturely.

The school is rethinking the approach to attendance which is below the national average. The headteacher and learning mentor have evaluated the effectiveness of the current provision and found that strategies to help and encourage persistent absentees to improve their attendance are not working. Having tapped into the expertise of other professionals a new approach has been devised and is being launched imminently. This incorporates rigorous monitoring, involvement of all staff and new procedures such as an immediate home visit on the first day of absence. Not all staff are making a concerted effort to sensitively support pupils' re-entry to school following a period of absence.

The effectiveness of provision

Although teaching is improving it is still too variable. Good teaching is not yet frequent enough to enable pupils to make sufficient gains in their learning and begin to close the gap between where they are and where they should be. Not enough time has passed for some teachers to consolidate their skills and provide consistently



satisfactory or better teaching. Some elements of unsatisfactory teaching persist and two inadequate lessons were seen by inspectors.

Senior leaders are beginning to tackle weaknesses in teaching through a systematic programme of lesson observations. All staff have received training in assessment which has improved their skills in making accurate judgements about the levels that pupils have reached. Regular progress meetings where assessment information is shared between class teachers and senior leaders prompts challenging dialogue about where pupils are in their learning and where they should be. Slow and static learners are instantly identified prompting additional support. Teachers are diligently marking pupils' work according to the school's new policy but the quality of comment to signpost pupils towards improvement is variable.

All staff are keen to improve, reflect on their practice and welcome constructive feedback following observations. Whole-school training and development has improved teachers' use of strategies such as clear starters, questioning pitched at different levels, talk partners and reporting back and group work. The impact is inconsistent across and within year groups. Where teaching is less successful, teachers use a technique without considering its impact on learning. Examples include: questioning but failing to clarify misconceptions when pupils are clearly confused about the answer, and not ensuring that talk partner interludes consolidate learning for all pupils.

Teaching assistants are rapidly improving their skills through additional training. Their time is used productively to support learning in lessons. Some work in tandem with teaching staff, for example by demonstrating and modelling skills for pupils to emulate while the teacher focuses pupils' attention on pertinent points. Pupils with challenging behaviour are supported effectively so that they are able to play a full part in lessons without disturbing others.

Weekly planning for literacy and numeracy draws upon national guidance to ensure progression. There is no overarching plan drawn from the National Curriculum to ensure that learning develops systematically year-on-year, providing opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills and receive their full entitlement. Teachers are unsure of what has been taught previously and this adversely affects the precision with which the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of most groups and individuals with highly specific needs.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching by eliminating all that is inadequate and ensuring that all pupils make good progress – inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Her judgements of teaching and learning are accurate and perceptive evidenced



through joint observations with inspectors. Roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been realigned with the improvement agenda rooted at the heart of their work. They fully understand their roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability are clear. Recognising the need for sustainability, albeit with mixed success, the school has invested in training for school leaders to equip them with the leadership skills to drive improvement forward effectively and share the load. Most, but not yet all, are delivering results speedily. Engagement with parents and carers is improving rapidly. They appreciate the improved accessibility of the headteacher and staff who recognise them as valuable partners in their children's education. The governing body holds the school fully to account. Training and better information provided by the school is enabling governors to ask searching questions, fulfil responsibility for monitoring the school's work and function effectively as 'critical friends'. Although there are some signs of recent improvement, progress since the last inspection has not been sufficient in tackling areas for improvement.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Develop the expertise of leaders across the school and ensure all contribute to school improvement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority's revised statement of action outlines a range of relevant support. To date it has provided satisfactory support. A major part of local authority support has been the advice given to school leaders for literacy and mathematics. This has had mixed success mainly because there is insufficient opportunity for consultants to return regularly enough to check the impact of their work. As a result, the school is providing further in-house training for staff. Funding for an expert school improvement consultant to work with the headteacher provides her with quality time to reflect on the school's progress, test out the accuracy of her judgements and discuss priorities and solutions to any barriers to success. Additional funding provided for the release of senior leaders from class teaching commitments has also been beneficial providing them with valuable time to contribute to monitoring activities.

A local authority review of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language has had little impact on improving provision. The Education Improvement Adviser and the School Improvement Partner are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the school's progress. Meetings with the school are regular. The local authority has not sought the school's view regarding the quality of its support and used this as a criterion by which it judges the impact of its actions.

Priorities for further improvement



- Ensure that, as a matter of urgency, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum providing rich opportunities for high quality learning to secure pupils' accelerated progress.