

Serco Inspections
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way
Middle Lane
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

T 0121 683 2347
Amelia.baker@serco.com



Thursday 6 May 2010

Mrs Joanne Evans
Acting Headteacher
Causeway Green Primary School
Penn cricket Lane
Oldbury
West Midlands
B68 8LX

Dear Mrs Evans

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Causeway Green Primary School

Following my visit with Peter Lawley to your school on Tuesday 4 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.

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 Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Additional Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Causeway Green Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Tuesday 4 May 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 18 lessons or part lessons and scrutinised documents. They met with the acting headteacher, senior staff, the chair of the Interim Executive Board, a representative from the local authority and a number of parents and carers who were present at the beginning and the end of the school day.

Context

Since the school was made subject to special measures there have been significant changes in leadership and management. The headteacher resigned at the end of April and the deputy headteacher is currently leading the school in the capacity of acting headteacher. There are plans to appoint a substantive headteacher, who will take up appointment in January 2011, by the end of the summer term. Four classroom teachers have tendered their resignations. Two teachers are currently on maternity leave and one temporary teacher is working in Years 3 and 4. The governing body has been disbanded and an Interim Executive Board has been in place since March 2010.

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

Attainment across the school remains low. The standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirm that high proportions of pupils are still working below the levels expected for their ages. School data show that attainment is highest in Year 6, where 60% of pupils are on track to meet the expected level in both English and mathematics. In Year 5, less than half of all pupils are working at age-related expectations in English and mathematics and attainment is only a little higher in all other years. The school has set ambitious targets for all year groups to improve their progress. Half-termly meetings about pupils' progress are now giving the school the capability to check the progress of classes and individuals. This enables senior leaders to have a realistic view of pupils' achievement and to identify where the most effective teaching is taking place. However, too many teachers have not been able to use this intelligence to ensure that more pupils are making the expected progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Inspectors found that, in three quarters of lessons seen, teachers were not making use of this assessment data to plan activities that encourage all pupils to really think about what they are learning. There is still too much of a focus in teachers' planning on what they expect pupils to be able to complete by the end of a lesson rather than what they expect them to have learnt. However, most teachers now have a more accurate view of pupils' attainment than earlier in the year and so their recording of pupils' progress is more

reliable. Evidence from pupils' books indicates that some are starting to make the progress expected of them although overall progress remains inadequate.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment, particularly of boys and all pupils in Key Stage 2 by
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - providing pupils with work which really stretches them, especially in writing and in mathematics – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are friendly and generally positive about their school. In class and on the playground, behaviour is satisfactory. The enthusiastic and reflective attitudes of pupils in the singing assembly were particularly impressive. Rigorous strategies to improve attendance are beginning to show signs of success. The school carefully analyses attendance by year groups and that of persistently absent individuals, although still not enough is done to track the attendance patterns of particular groups, particularly boys and others whose progress in class is particularly weak. An area of strength is the school's strong promotion of good attendance throughout the school through prizes and celebration assemblies. Parents are increasingly involved in strategies to reduce absenteeism. For instance, they are telephoned on the first day of absence and are called into school to discuss lateness or unauthorised absence. Consequently, the attendance rate of 93.5% for the first two terms of this year is significantly higher than for the same period last year, despite two weeks in which attendance was affected by snow. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has halved and punctuality has greatly improved.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve attendance so that it is at least average, to improve the progress of pupils who miss too many lessons – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Of the 18 lessons observed, four were good. This is a big improvement over the previous inspection when no teaching was judged as good. Nine lessons were satisfactory and five inadequate. However, a high proportion of the inadequate teaching was in lessons taught by temporary staff or teachers who have resigned their post. Relationships in lessons continue to be positive and teaching assistants are well deployed to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included in lessons. Better practice is developing in providing more challenge for pupils and extending their learning in some lessons. In these effective lessons teacher's planning shows that teachers are aware of the need to provide for the range of abilities in their classes. They have strategies to check how well pupils are learning in lessons and amend planning for the next day when they have

reflected on how well the lesson went. Teachers are highlighting what they want pupils to achieve in lessons and give good feedback to them on their success at meeting the lesson's objectives. These good lessons provided plenty of challenge for the high attainers with teachers making particularly good use of searching questions to draw detailed and full answers from pupils. The management of pupils' behaviour is a strength of many of the lessons seen.

Despite these improvements, there is not enough good or better teaching to overturn the legacy of underachievement and many serious weaknesses remain. Learning is held back because too many teachers expect too little of pupils and, consequently, tasks set in lessons are undemanding and lack imagination. Too often, pupils carry out tasks mechanically, without knowing why they are doing them. Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to ensure that the tasks they set for pupils take account of their particular needs. Too often in lessons, all pupils complete the same task, low-attaining pupils waste time copying material they do not understand and higher-attaining pupils have to sit through lengthy lesson introductions before being able to get on with their work. Even when the lesson takes account of the range of abilities in a class, progress is too often no better than satisfactory because of the emphasis in English on increasing the pupils' knowledge about writing, rather than developing their skills in writing. This emphasis is contributing to inadequate progress. Pupils are often able to define adverbs, clauses and open questions, for example, but too many struggle to write simple sentences.

Teachers' planning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities does not always consider their needs. Consequently, the level of challenge in lessons is often too low. For example, in mathematics and literacy lessons, activities set for the lowest attainers such as copying, drawing and colouring of diagrams do little to address their urgent needs.

A general weakness in the less effective lessons is the quality of questioning. Teachers ask questions, particularly during lesson introductions, but these have less impact on learning than in the good lessons. This is because their questions often require single word responses without explanation or justification. Teachers often ask questions to the whole class, then select a pupil who raises a hand to volunteer an answer. Relatively few pupils contribute and the questioning rarely generates any discussion or supplementary questions. This approach does not enable teachers to challenge individual pupils' understanding or track their progress.

All staff have undertaken training in 'close the gap' marking but its implementation across the school is too variable. In pupils' books, teachers' comments as to how to improve are still not specific enough. For instance, in a Year 2 literacy book a teacher has commented 'This is not a sentence. I am really disappointed', rather than modelling or identifying examples of a proper sentence from the pupils' own work. Too often, comments are banal or repetitive and are not followed up in the next piece of work. Inconsistent use is made of National Curriculum levels and level statements. The move towards pasting them in the books of older pupils and

highlighting coverage is beneficial, but the criteria need to be reinforced by being put into relevant language that pupils can understand, and woven into the advice given when books are marked.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve marking and other feedback given to pupils so that they know precisely what they need to do to improve their work – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Until very recently, there has been a lack of rigour in the work of the school's leaders. The actions they have implemented to improve the quality of education have so far had very little impact, particularly in the key areas of raising achievement and tackling weaknesses in teaching. For example, in the past, most records of lesson observations have focused on provision instead of learning. As a result, they have not given the clear messages to staff that are needed to bring about improvement.

The acting headteacher has good analytical skills, is clear-thinking and is entirely realistic in her appraisal and identification of key weaknesses in the school's performance. She has shown herself to be tenacious at ensuring that staff and the Interim Executive Board are made fully aware of these deficiencies. She shares with her two assistant headteachers a complete understanding that, until the school is clear about the factors that result in pupils achieving less well than they should, the support provided by external consultants and through the Extended Additional Support team is unlikely to secure improvement. She communicates this understanding persuasively to staff.

The school's implementation of its programme of monitoring and evaluation activities has now changed direction and has accelerated. Written and verbal feedback to teachers now focuses more on the learning and progress of pupils. Areas for development are now far more precise and are followed up in subsequent observations. The impact of this more rigorous approach to checking the quality of teaching and its impact on learning is shown by the growing number of good lessons although overall, the quality of teaching and learning has not improved as quickly as it should have.

Following the placing of the school in special measures, the local authority took steps to disband the governing body and replace it with an Interim Executive Board. This met for the first time in March. The chair of this board is deeply committed to improving the school's effectiveness and is working closely with the acting headteacher to gain a full understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is now in a position to hold the school to account and is actively working with the local authority and school leaders on plans to re-structure and streamline leadership and management, appoint a new substantive headteacher and replace

the teachers that have resigned this term. The school is meeting statutory safeguarding requirements.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that leaders monitor teaching and learning robustly, to identify and tackle weaknesses – inadequate.

External support

The local authority has produced a statement of action that meets requirements. The implementation of this plan has led to the school receiving good assistance to strengthen the effectiveness of teaching, governance and leadership and management. The local authority has been particularly supportive of the deputy and senior leadership team since the school went into special measures and of the acting headteacher following the resignation of the previous headteacher. A retired headteacher supported the previous headteacher prior to his resignation. A similar arrangement has been secured with an experienced headteacher working with the school for 2.5 days a week. The impact of the local authority's support has been satisfactory because school leaders are now confident, clear sighted and well supported in their determination to implement the action plan.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all pupils, but particularly boys, accelerate the rate of progress they make in all lessons so that 80% the expected progress over a year.
- Improve teaching so that all teachers make use of assessment information to plan activities that stretch the higher-attaining pupils but which also support and motivate those who learn at a slower pace.
- Strengthen and embed the approach to marking so that it used consistently and effectively to make clear to pupils precisely what they need to do to improve their work.