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Mr M Britt
Headteacher
Canonbury Primary School
Canonbury Road
London
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Dear Mr Britt

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Canonbury Primary School

Following my visit with Olson Davis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28–29 September 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 March 2010. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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 Governors and the Director of Children's Services for Islington and Cambridge Education@Islington.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Canonbury Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28–29 September 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

At the time of the school's section 5 inspection in March, the headteacher had been in post for two weeks. The term following the inspection saw the departure of a significant number of teaching and support staff and the appointment of new staff. The senior leadership team was replaced with two new deputy headteachers and three new senior teachers. In addition, the school's Director of Standards is being seconded from Cambridge Education@Islington for a year.

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

Pupils say they enjoy learning in lessons that develop their independent learning skills, such as problem solving, investigating, researching and role play. Until recently, there have been too few opportunities for developing these skills, especially in mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). The school is beginning to address this issue so that pupils can progress at their own pace. In the large majority of lessons, most pupils now make satisfactory progress. The more able pupils, however, remain insufficiently challenged to achieve higher levels. As teachers are not using assessments to inform the level of work for individual pupils, standards of attainment vary from year to year and for different groups of pupils. For example, attainment in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 dipped in 2008 to well below average. It returned to well above average in 2009, except in science. The school's data for 2010 indicate another dip, particularly for the more able pupils, but attainment would appear to be above average. Attainment in the national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 has been consistently well above average for the past four years. It is well above average for all groups of pupils except boys, pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or for whom English is an additional language. Until very recently, the school was not identifying these underachieving pupils or providing appropriate intervention for them. Suitable systems are now in place to enable the school to do so.

While children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2010 achieved well below age-related expectations, children currently in the Nursery and Reception classes make satisfactory progress. The local authority provides effective support for

the new coordinator in developing the curriculum to meet the needs of individual children. As a result, the school is beginning to use assessment information to plan for individual children's learning and development. The level of challenge and adults' questioning skills, however, has still to be developed. Any health and safety issues are addressed promptly.

Judgement

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring there is effective leadership and management of the provision
 - ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of individual children
 - ensuring that activities challenge children sufficiently and that adults' questioning develops children's thinking and extends their learning
 - using assessment information more rigorously to inform planning and to set high expectations for children's learning and development
 - making sure that staff are more vigilant in spotting minor health and safety issues.
- satisfactory progress.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 in order to raise attainment in mathematics, science and ICT – satisfactory progress.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour continues to be good. Pupils enjoy coming to school; the school's data indicate their attendance was high last year. They are very aware of how to adopt safe and healthy lifestyles and they enjoy participating in sport and activities, such as street dance. They make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. For example, the school council is developing a new school uniform and some pupils participated in debating with other schools at the town hall. Pupils develop suitable skills that will support them in their future education and employment, particularly in reading, speaking and listening, although opportunities to develop skills in ICT remain limited. Improvements in the curriculum support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as in Year 3 where pupils research world religions. Pupils work together well in lessons.

The effectiveness of provision

While the quality of teaching in the large majority of lessons is satisfactory, it is becoming more consistent due to the introduction of suitable common formats for planning and marking pupils' work, and a new learning and teaching policy. Improvements are evident in teachers' use of learning objectives and success criteria

to assess pupils' progress in lessons. The introduction of curricular targets for literacy and numeracy helps pupils to know how to improve their work. As the system for progress tracking and target setting has only recently been introduced, however, teachers are not setting work at the appropriate level for all pupils, particularly the more able pupils. They are beginning to plan different tasks for groups of pupils in mathematics lessons and to engage them in more practical learning skills, such as problem solving. The school is aware of the need for a more practical approach to science through investigation. All pupils now have ICT lessons, but the curriculum is limited by the lack of resources. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils remains satisfactory and safeguarding requirements are met.

Judgement

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Accelerate pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 in order to raise attainment in mathematics, science and ICT by:
 - eliminating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that more of it is consistently good
 - improving teachers' use of assessment information to plan work that builds on the previous learning of all groups of pupils
 - ensuring that the more able pupils are always given suitably challenging work
 - improving the provision for teaching ICT skills across the school.
- satisfactory progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management have been restructured to strengthen the school's capacity to make the necessary improvements. The impact of the work of the headteacher, deputy headteachers and senior teachers is beginning to be seen in the more consistent approach to teaching and in the improved environment for learning. The improvements are due to the introduction of clear policies and procedures, including performance management of staff. Lesson observations are mostly accurate and focus appropriately on pupils' progress. While teachers' planning is monitored regularly, scrutiny of pupils' work is not in place. A robust system for target setting and monitoring pupils' progress enables the senior team to evaluate the achievement of all pupils, to identify underachieving groups, and to implement appropriate intervention programmes. The developments are too recent to show any impact on pupils' achievement at this time. Regular evaluation of the school's post-inspection action plan and comprehensive Raising Achievement Plan ensures the required improvements are being addressed appropriately.

Judgement

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Develop an effective leadership and management structure across the school and ensure that all staff with leadership and management responsibilities fulfil their roles effectively, especially in improving the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory.

External support

The quality and impact of the external support provided for the school by Cambridge Education@Islington, including from the School Improvement Partner, is good. An extensive range of support covers all identified areas for improvement. The school is suitably challenged and held to account for its improvements through the measurable milestones outlined in the Raising Achievement Plan. The Plan addresses satisfactorily the amendments required in the local authority's statement of action.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure teachers use the system for monitoring pupils' progress, particularly individual targets, to plan work to support and challenge all pupils to make consistently good progress.