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Mrs A Hilton-Childs
Headteacher
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Surrey
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Dear Mrs Hilton-Childs

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Meath Green Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 25–26 January 2011, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annexe to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is satisfactory.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection is satisfactory.

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 Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009.

- Raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science by putting in place, by April 2010, an effective and consistent system for assessing pupils' progress – satisfactory.
- Ensure teaching improves by summer 2010 so that all is satisfactory, and much good, and that pupils' learning is appropriately challenging and based on good assessment information – satisfactory.
- Monitor the quality of teaching more rigorously so good practice can be identified and weaknesses eliminated by summer 2010 – satisfactory.
- Ensure there is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school by senior leaders and governors so that ambition to improve pupils' attainment is evident for the more-able pupils by summer 2010 – satisfactory.
- Urgently develop a school improvement plan, based on rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, to tackle the weaknesses in pupils' outcomes which are evident from poor performance through Key Stage 2 – satisfactory.

Special measures: monitoring of Meath Green Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 25–26 January 2011

Evidence

The HMI and the shadow HMI observed the school's work through observing lessons, scrutiny of documents and pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, teachers, SENCO, groups of pupils, three parents, one governor, the Chair of the Governing Body and one representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit, the local authority has continued its support for the school through the School Improvement Partner. The school has maintained good links with a nearby junior school, a primary school in North London and a school in Central London that was featured in the Ofsted Assessing Pupils' Survey. These links have continued to result in productive working and sharing of good practice.

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

The school has continued to consolidate improvements in relation to its priority areas arising from the last monitoring visit. Reassessments of Year 3 pupils' attainment on entry to school, using the Performance Indicator in Primary Schools (PIPS) together with profile data on individual pupils and groups of pupils, indicate greater accuracy in tracking of pupils' progress and achievement. However, the school is aware that pupils arrive in school with gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills profile.

Overall for the period December 2009-2010, according to the school's data, rates of sub-levels of progress have greatly improved for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics compared to the previous year. However, the school realises that while it has met its target of 75% of pupils making expected sub-levels of progress, this appears to be uneven across year groups and between subjects. There are significant numbers of pupils in Year 6 who have not made any progress over the year: notably one fifth of pupils in writing and over one tenth of pupils in mathematics. Across the school, pupils' attainment was generally strongest in reading and weakest in writing but Year 4 pupils made less progress in mathematics than in reading or writing.

The school has missed its target of 100% of pupils making at least one sub-level of progress by 6% overall, with 11% of pupils not making any progress in writing and 7% of Year 6 pupils not making any progress in mathematics. Year 6 pupils with special educational needs, School Action and School Action Plus have made less progress than their peers in all subjects, and those in Year 4 have made less progress in mathematics than their peers.



The interventions identified by the school to address areas of weakness include a boys' writing project, which has been initiated, through teaching of Year 6 pupils in single-gender groups. The school has yet to evaluate the impact of these actions on pupils' literacy skills.

In lessons, most pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and a few are making good progress. However, the majority of pupils who make inadequate progress or do not attain the standards they should in line with their potential are those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are less able. In some cases of good practice, teachers are now setting learning objectives with differentiated success criteria based on their pupils' prior attainment, and learning activities reflect these. However, in most cases observed by inspectors the pace of teaching and staging of activities do not consistently take into account the full ability range of pupils. Moreover, just under half of the teaching assistants were observed. In these instances, they were not identifying success criteria in line with their pupils' abilities and not encouraging their pupils to develop independent learning strategies.

A satisfactory range of assessment activities increasingly informs teachers of the progress that individual pupils make. Peer and self-assessment activities are not routinely in place. Mathematics and literacy targets are in place, with pupils encouraged to identify their own targets. However, the links between the targets, ways of judging success and the learning objectives and how these relate to the information teachers have on their pupils, are still not consistent.

Handwriting skills and presentation of work in all subjects have continued to improve significantly since the last visit. But in a minority of cases, the volume of work observed in books is below expectations and standards for the year group.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science by:
 - putting in place, by April 2010, an effective and consistent system for assessing pupils' progress – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

In general, pupils' behaviour is excellent and they are respectful, enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are very proud of helping around the school, for instance, in terms of additional responsibilities as library assistants. Although the school has pupil buddies across all age groups, some pupils reported on insufficiently structured peer mentoring activities relating to this role and in particular, for newly-arrived Year 3 pupils. Pupils' spiritual awareness is good, as promoted through assemblies. Although the school has an International School Award acknowledging "cultural awareness across the curriculum", pupils would benefit from greater opportunities to consolidate this in lessons.



The effectiveness of provision

The teaching observed was mostly satisfactory with some good teaching. However on this visit, a minority of inadequate teaching was observed. In these instances, a number of pupils did not make any, or made very little, progress against the learning objectives, as the success criteria were not pitched at the right level and did not take into account the significant gaps in pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. Lower ability pupils make less progress in these situations than higher ability pupils who appear to grasp learning objectives quicker and work more independently. However, even for these more-able pupils, there remains insufficient challenge in the activities and learning outcomes.

In mathematics, pupils practise simple number calculations to gain confidence in their numeracy skills, in some cases with good transference to everyday contexts. However, some of the learning is still too rooted in mechanistic tasks and pupils of lower ability, in particular, are not given adequate opportunities to transfer these to everyday contexts. In writing skills activities, too many pupils lack independent strategies for ensuring accurate spellings and punctuation. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to enliven lessons, but there are still missed opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills. Good opportunities exist for pupils to practise their reading skills and these are highly valued.

The quality of verbal feedback pupils receive in class is improving and in some cases, teachers pay good attention to checking whether all pupils have fully understood a teaching objective before moving on to the next activity. However, not all teachers evaluate the responses of those who indicate that they have not fully understood, and adapt activities in the light of this. Teachers continue to provide pupils with much valued constructive comments on written work. However, marking of assessed work is inconsistent across the school and although pupils are given opportunities to complete redrafting and corrections of their work, there were still significant gaps in the books scrutinised by inspectors.

Although pupils have greater access to dictionaries during lessons, their use of these is still inconsistent. The 'word banks' and 'words of common frequency', on display in classrooms, are not routinely used by pupils as an effective spelling resource. Cross-curricular links to develop literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts are much more firmly embedded in lessons and contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Some good examples were observed on this visit which linked history through the Victorian theme to narrative settings, and geography through the Brazilian Rainforest to formal letter writing.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure teaching improves by summer 2010 so that all is satisfactory, and much good, and that pupils' learning is appropriately challenging and based on good assessment information – satisfactory.



The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's revised lesson observation process and format are being amended once more so as to ensure greater impact. The headteacher and senior leaders are working well on the actions within the Single Action Plan. However, the school has not demonstrated sufficient clarity and rigour in monitoring the impact of these actions on pupils' learning.

The assistant headteacher has piloted with Year 6 pupils an 'assessing pupil progress' scheme with learning objectives linked to differentiated success criteria and this is now to be implemented across the school.

At the last monitoring visit, the school had made satisfactory progress on improving the rigour with which teaching and learning were monitored in relation to the time of its last inspection. However, on this visit, a number of initiatives now in place to improve teaching and assessment have had a barely discernible impact on the quality of the monitoring process, as these have not been sufficiently evaluated by managers and year leaders during observations. Moderation of these observations means that some judgements are still not in line with the text they describe and do not take account of the learning and progress of all groups of pupils. Actions resulting from these observations and from the pupil progress meetings are not precise enough and their impact unclear.

Parents interviewed by inspectors reported satisfaction with the progress the school is making. A point was raised by one parent that the parental forum provided a good channel for communications with the school and parents were encouraged to raise concerns. However, senior managers did not always consistently ensure that concerns were rigorously followed through, for instance, in relation to the impact of an individual teacher's classroom practice on a pupil's motivation and learning.

The governing body has been proactive in working with the school on electronic data analysis and senior managers have now produced better quality pupil performance data. Middle managers and teaching staff are still not using this information to plan lessons. The school is very aware that in the light of their pupils' skills gaps, they need to work more proactively with their feeder infant schools during the academic year. In addition, the school acknowledges the benefits of a structured transitional curriculum, established in partnership with these schools for Year 3 pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Monitor the quality of teaching more rigorously so good practice can be identified and weaknesses eliminated by summer 2010 – satisfactory.
- Ensure there is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school by senior leaders and governors so that ambition to improve pupils' attainment is evident for the more-able pupils by summer 2010 – satisfactory.



- Urgently develop a school improvement plan, based on rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, to tackle the weaknesses in pupils' outcomes which are evident from poor performance through Key Stage 2 – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide satisfactory support. However, since the last visit officers have not focused sufficiently on developing the senior and middle leadership team's capacity to monitor new initiatives and the quality of its provision with consistent rigour.

Ensuring more proactive ways of working with leaders and managers at all levels will continue to be crucial in sustaining capacity to improve. A priority for the local authority is supporting the school in developing more productive ways of working with its infant feeder schools through identifying skills gaps in Year 3 pupils and structuring better transition arrangements.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that senior and middle managers work closely with teachers and teaching assistants in using pupil performance data and setting appropriate learning objectives and success criteria and that these relate to activities and tasks, leading to improved learning and progress in lessons.
- Ensure that the headteacher has a strategic lead on teaching, learning and assessment for:
 - greater consistency and accuracy in lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny
 - greater rigour and precision in actions and follow through of these from lesson observations and pupil progress meetings
 - productive lesson planning between teaching assistants and teachers that meet the learning objectives and success criteria for all ability levels
 - greater consistency in assessment practice, marking and redrafting of pupils' work
 - evidencing timely impact of these strategic and operational actions in the Single Action Plan.
- Ensure the local authority support senior and middle managers in:
 - more robust moderation of lesson observations for greater consistency and accuracy
 - more productive ways of working with its infant feeder schools on identifying skills gaps in Year 3 pupils and structuring better transition arrangements.

