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5 November 2010

Mrs Morag Harrison
Headteacher
Dukesgate Primary School
Earlesdon Crescent
Little Hulton
Salford
Greater Manchester
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Dear Mrs Harrison

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Dukesgate Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **inadequate**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **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 Salford local authority.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - accelerating the pace of learning during lessons
 - ensuring that pupils are more actively involved in their learning
 - matching work more precisely to individual needs
 - using assessment effectively so that pupils know what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - making it more relevant, practical and motivating so that pupils are more engaged with their learning
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills across a range of subjects.
- Accelerate the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by putting effective intervention strategies in place so that they are consistently well supported.

Special measures: monitoring of Dukesgate Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' books and met with the headteacher, nominated staff, a group of pupils and the School Improvement Partner who is also the representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector observed seven lessons as well as the school's enrichment hour, a number of intervention strategies and parts of other lessons.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, one member of staff has joined the school. At the time of the monitoring visit, one class was taught by a temporary teacher. An application has been made by the local authority for the governing body to be replaced by an Interim Executive Board.

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

Validated assessment data for Key Stage 1 show that the overall attainment of pupils declined at the end of the last academic year and was significantly below average. Results declined least in mathematics: those in reading and writing were significantly below average. No pupils attained the higher Level 3 in reading or writing. The school did not undertake the statutory examinations for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010. However, the school's own assessments suggest that, in 2010, there was some improvement in pupils' attainment compared to results in 2009, and that the attainment of pupils in 2010 was higher in mathematics than it was in English. The school's data suggest that attainment in Key Stage 2 remains below average and that writing is a particular weakness. These data also show that there are wide variations in the relative attainment of different year groups. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' books confirm the weaknesses in pupils' writing. Although pupils now have more opportunities to write in different genres, too often, basic errors in key spellings, frequently used words and punctuation are left uncorrected. The presentation of too much of pupils' work is unsatisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to make steady progress in their learning. The coordinator for special educational needs and the recently appointed manager of the school's learning support unit have attended specialist training. The latter has quickly examined the effectiveness of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and considered carefully the impact of intervention strategies. Consequently, a more effective strategy to improve reading has been introduced. A number of other strategies, including one-to-one

sessions focused on developing reading and mathematical skills, promote these pupils' literacy and numerical skills well. The effectiveness of additional adults who support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has also been audited and, following training, their skills have been matched more effectively to the needs of different pupils. In lessons observed, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were generally well supported by additional adults and some made good progress in their learning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- accelerate the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by putting effective intervention strategies in place so that they are consistently well supported – **satisfactory**.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils confirm that the stricter application of the school's behaviour code has improved behaviour. In some lessons, behaviour was good but in others it was poor and this slowed the rate of learning, particularly when it was not checked by teachers at an early stage. The school's data indicate that there was a slight improvement in annual attendance in 2009/10 compared to the previous year and that the school met its target for attendance. This improvement has continued in the first half term of the new academic year, although it is stronger in some year groups than others.

The effectiveness of provision

Since the last monitoring inspection the school has made slow progress in improving the proportion of good teaching and in reducing the proportion of satisfactory and inadequate teaching. Too much satisfactory and inadequate teaching remains. Where teaching was inadequate, weaknesses in behaviour management meant that poor behaviour was not dealt with promptly, that pupils were off-task and distracting others and that learning time was lost. In turn, this meant that some activities, such as plenary sessions at the end of lessons, were too short. Tasks for some younger pupils were not sharply focused enough on learning and opportunities for learning through play activities were not taken advantage of fully. Where teaching was satisfactory, resources were usually well prepared and information and communication technology (ICT) was generally well used to introduce lessons and stimulate and hold pupils' interest. The use of additional adults in lessons has improved since the last monitoring visit and less-able pupils are now better supported. However, in some lessons, too long was spent on group activities which meant that the pace of learning was not as fast as it could have been and that pupils were not moved onto more difficult work swiftly enough. There was not enough challenge for more-able learners and there was, at times, too much teacher talk. Examples of this occurred in some plenary sessions which deprived pupils of the opportunity to think about and articulate answers to questions. In some cases, time

was not well used. Teachers did not instil a sense of urgency in pupils about the need to keep on-task and complete work quickly and to a high standard. Some basic weaknesses in teaching remain, such as writing on whiteboards that is not particularly clear and displaying writing that contains grammatical errors.

Where teaching was good, pupils were kept on-task by good behaviour management, plans were carefully adhered to and pupils were given careful explanations about what they had to do. Teachers checked carefully that pupils understood their tasks and learning proceeded at a fast pace because expectations of what pupils should accomplish in the lesson and how work should be presented were high. In these lessons, when pupils were working independently, teachers usefully focused their time on a particular group of pupils while ensuring that other pupils remained on-task.

Teachers' planning improved. Timings of sessions have been added to literacy and numeracy plans to remind teachers of how long to spend on each part of the lesson. However, these are not always adhered to. Planning usefully indicates which groups of pupils teachers and additional adults are to work with and identifies opportunities for cross-curricular links. However, opportunities to improve pupils' writing, spelling and presentation are not always taken advantage of in subjects, such as mathematics. There is some scope to improve planning for short sessions of learning, such as guided reading, so that what is expected of pupils who are working independently is much clearer. Learning objectives and success criteria are now routinely displayed in pupils' books. However, not all work is marked and too often, basic errors are left uncorrected. Pupils spoken to during the monitoring visit reported that there are inconsistencies in the amount of homework they receive. Pupils' understanding of the National Curriculum levels they are working at and are aiming for has improved well.

Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the curriculum. The school has devoted much time to this and a thematic approach to the curriculum has been introduced which links learning in a number of subjects. This draws on topics such as volcanoes, 'extreme environments' and dinosaurs that have engaged pupils' interests well. Improved ICT facilities have been used well by pupils during their work on these topics and this also promotes their interest in learning. However, there is a need for teachers to ensure that skills learnt in literacy, for example, accurate spelling of key words, are consistently and rigorously applied by pupils when writing about these topics and that work is presented neatly. There is a greater use of educational trips and visitors to the school. These are particularly fruitful when directly linked to topics studied by pupils. The school's weekly enrichment hour provides some opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills. An example of this was the newspaper group, where pupils were observed writing articles for a school newspaper. There is scope for the school to review its curriculum and its timings to ensure that all learning time is used as effectively as possible to improve pupils' attainment.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better – **inadequate**
- improve the quality of the curriculum – **satisfactory**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

At the last monitoring visit, the school was given an additional priority area for further improvement which required school leaders and governors to undertake training which would enable them to drive forward the school's improvement successfully. The school has made inadequate progress on this issue. Although a number of improvements have been made to the school environment and the curriculum since the previous monitoring inspection, the school's leaders have not focused sufficiently or robustly enough on the urgent need to improve the quality of teaching and learning rapidly.

Following the last monitoring inspection, a series of lesson observations was undertaken by the School's Improvement Partner with the headteacher. This identified a number of weaknesses in teaching. However, subsequent actions by the school, which include useful initiatives such as 'learning walks', support and training for staff and opportunities to observe good practice in other settings, have not followed up these weaknesses in a sustained and effective fashion. As a result, these measures have had little impact in increasing the proportion of good teaching and in eliminating inadequate teaching. The school does not have a deeply embedded enough view of what constitutes good and better teaching. The school has begun to develop its own monitoring systems but these are not robust enough. Consequently, the school's view of the overall quality of teaching is overgenerous. A plan for the improvement of teaching and learning lacks detail about how proposed actions will raise the quality of teaching and of how improvement will be accurately checked and measured. Teachers' planning is now monitored on a weekly basis and verbal feedback is provided to staff. There is scope to develop this further, for example, in suggesting specific improvements to staff on how learning can be improved. Interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their work have been introduced. A new senior leadership team has been formed and new job descriptions for teachers' roles drawn up. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers have been suitably linked to the progress made by pupils. There is scope for this to be more sharply focused on improving the progress of particular groups of pupils. Performance management procedures have been introduced for other classroom staff.

Due to a decline in membership and difficulties in recruitment, the governing body has been unable to hold the school and its leaders fully to account or to provide the strategic leadership and clear direction necessary to help drive the school's improvement. To some extent, the governing body has been hampered in its work

by uncertainty about its future and its possible replacement by an Interim Executive Board. Although some governors have assumed additional roles, these roles have not been developed. There is also no specific committee that examines and monitors with the necessary regularity and depth the progress that the school is making in addressing the issues identified for improvement at the last inspection.

External support

The local authority has provided sound support to the school. It has initiated the application for an Interim Executive Board to replace the governing body. Consultants from the local authority have worked alongside members of staff and financial training has been provided for the headteacher. The School Improvement Partner has visited the school since the last monitoring inspection and carried out a series of key lesson observations. She has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The headteacher is supported in her work by a Local Leader of Education based in another school. The school's deputy headteacher is also being supported in the development of her role by that school's deputy headteacher. The resources of the Greater Manchester Challenge have been drawn on to provide training for a number of staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Resolve quickly the uncertainty over the future of the school's governance so that governance can be developed and thus enabled to hold leaders and managers to account and to contribute to the strategic leadership of the school.