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Mr James Pearce
Lodge Primary School
Oak Lane
West Bromwich
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Dear Mr Pearce

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lodge Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15–16 March 2011, 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 May 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) may be appointed subject to the following conditions. The school must involve the local authority in the appointment process. The NQT should be mentored in school by a teacher of proven high quality. All NQT entitlements must be met in full. Appropriate internal and external development, support and induction must be provided.

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 Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Raise levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and accelerate pupils' learning and progress across all three key stages by:
 - setting a clear direction for the school that focuses on improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching by strengthening the role of all leaders and holding staff to account for pupils' progress
 - ensuring that the tracking of pupils' progress is up to date and the information is used effectively to address underachievement
 - ensuring that programmes to raise attainment in phonics and writing are consistently and securely implemented by all staff
 - increasing pupils' levels of attendance.

- Improve the quality of teaching across all three key stages by:
 - ensuring that lesson planning makes effective use of assessment information to match activities accurately to pupils' abilities and that teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - identifying, within lessons, when pupils are ready for the next steps in their learning
 - responding to pupils' work and informing them of the actions they need to take to improve and achieve their learning targets
 - setting clear expectations of what is required in lessons and establishing robust systems to check that all staff are following these guidelines.

- To improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement, leaders and managers should:
 - ensure that all staff engage fully with the school's drive for further improvement
 - be more systematic in following up weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment within challenging timescales
 - in all strategic planning, add specific, quantifiable and timed targets so that progress towards them is measurable and can be reported accurately.

Special measures: monitoring of Lodge Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 15–16 March 2011

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leadership team, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the headteacher from the partner school.

Context

Since the last visit in November 2010, the school community has been devastated by the death of the nursery teacher following a long illness. Since February 2011, one of the assistant headteachers has been absent from school. During this period, her duties have been shared among the senior leadership team. Two new parent governors have been appointed.

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

Inspection findings and the school's own data confirm that significant numbers of pupils are underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics across the school but there are encouraging signs of improvement. Although there are some differences between cohorts, boys generally attain less well than girls. The attainment of Pakistani girls and White British pupils is particularly low in some year groups. Weaknesses remain in letter formation, presentation, punctuation and spelling which impede pupils' progress in writing. Although increasing opportunities are being provided for pupils to write at length in subjects other than literacy, they are still not frequent enough in some classes. Inaccurate number formation and orientation, reversals and lack of confidence in solving number problems prevent pupils achieving as well as they should in mathematics.

Teachers are using assessment information more routinely to identify and target pupils for improvement. Initiatives, such as pupil progress meetings, are increasingly being used by teachers to plan and address pupils' individual needs. A number of intervention groups designed to accelerate rates of pupil progress have been established and range of assessment strategies have been implemented. Consequently, increasing numbers of pupils are making accelerated progress. For instance, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are making good progress, especially in all aspects of communication, language and literacy. In Key Stage 1, pupils are progressing well in mathematics while in Key Stage 2 rapid improvements are being made in writing. Pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve their challenging English and mathematics targets in the 2011 Key Stage 2 national tests because they are benefiting from focused, high quality teaching.

A good range of initiatives have been implemented to encourage pupils to come to school more regularly. These have been effective in improving attendance which is considerably higher than it was at this time last year. Despite being adversely affected by religious celebrations such as Eid, inclement weather and illness, attendance has improved to 94.4%, which is now average.

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

- Raise levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and accelerate pupils' learning and progress across all three key stages – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour is good. In classrooms, pupils cooperate well with each other and share resources. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. In a number of lessons adults effectively use praise and encouragement to help pupils feel confident to persevere with their learning.

The effectiveness of provision

Overall, the quality of teaching is similar to that found at the previous monitoring visit. Teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and the majority plan their lessons to suit the different needs and abilities of the pupils. In most lessons there is a calm atmosphere conducive to learning. The large majority of teachers have established clear expectations so that lessons operate effectively. There is good support from teaching assistants. The many pupils with learning needs are given effective support and make satisfactory progress. Occasionally, the pace of learning moves on too quickly or the more able are insufficiently challenged. In addition, weaknesses in pupils' prior knowledge impede their progress. For instance, pupils' inaccuracy in computing numbers, their slow recall of tables facts or lack of confidence in using mathematical apparatus, reduces progress in lessons.

Assessment information is being better used to inform weekly planning. Peer and self-assessment strategies are routinely used by pupils to evaluate their learning in lessons. Work has also progressed at a pace to implement the Assessing Pupil Progress process of assessment throughout the school. This is providing teachers with a clearer understanding of how well pupils are progressing. However, this is used better in Key Stage 1 where 'evidence books' are well used, assessment sheets are routinely completed and outcomes of pupils' progress is recorded in detail. This work is less well embedded in Key Stage 2. The quality of marking has improved appreciably since the last visit. Increasingly, teachers are accurately identifying what pupils need to do next to improve their work, although some variability remains. For instance, although most teachers provide time for pupils to read and respond to their comments, this is not always the case.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching across all three key stages – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

All staff and governors are determined and committed to school improvement and there remains a positive feel to the school. Consistent leadership since the previous monitoring visit has enabled the school to focus sharply on its priority of improving teaching and raising standards. Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and appropriate actions have been taken to bring about improvements. Initiatives are monitored rigorously through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and regular assessments. The school's tracking system to monitor pupils' achievement is detailed and makes sensible use of test and assessment data. It provides the school with robust evidence of where there is underachievement. Analysis is used routinely by school leaders to hold staff to account for rates of progress. For instance, teachers produce and implement action plans in response to pupil progress meetings which are contributing to improved provision.

The coordinators for English and mathematics provide good leadership for their subjects. With appropriate professional advice and support from both the local authority and partnership school, they are leading a range of initiatives to improve pupils' progress. For example, weaknesses in medium term planning have been identified and rectified and a calculation policy has been written and is ready for implementation. In addition, a range of strategies such as 'Mathletics' and 'Story into writing' have been introduced which are beginning to impact on pupil outcomes.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement, leaders and managers – satisfactory

External support

The school has continued to benefit from a good level of support from the local authority. The support of consultants, the School Improvement Partner and partnership school has been beneficial in developing the skills of senior leaders as well as providing targeted support for individual teachers. Further financial assistance has enabled the school to provide valuable additional teaching support for Year 6 pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified in the inspection of May 2010. With regard to these, the school's specific priorities are to:

- improve the quality of pupils' presentation, punctuation, spelling, and number and letter formation skills
- provide increased opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English
- embed the recently introduced assessment processes, particularly in Key Stage 2.