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24 February 2012

Ms M Buckland
Headteacher
Sutton Park Community Primary School
Greatfield Road
Kidderminster
DY11 6PH

Dear Ms Buckland

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sutton Park Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22–23 February 2012, 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 March 2011. 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed provided they are mentored by the headteacher or deputy headteacher.

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 Worcestershire .

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The following areas were identified for improvement during the inspection which took place in March 2011

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science across the school, including in the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that assessment procedures give teachers the necessary information to make sure that lessons are challenging and matched closely to pupils' prior attainment
 - ensuring that the curriculum is modified effectively to meet the needs of all pupils and in particular those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the growing number of those who speak English as an additional language
 - planning work that motivates and inspires pupils and promotes their enjoyment of learning.

- Improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of all pupils by:
 - taking a more rigorous approach to promoting regular attendance
 - ensuring that effective systems are in place to support and record the progress of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable
 - ensuring that pupils are prepared well for living in a multicultural United Kingdom.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - embedding ambition throughout the school, through introducing rigorous procedures for checking on pupils' attainment and progress, the quality of provision and planning effectively for school improvement
 - giving all leaders the training, time and resources they need to significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning ensuring that systems to track pupils' progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2 are based on accurate assessments and are used effectively by all teachers when planning lessons, to meet the needs of all pupils and raise attainment
 - ensuring that the governing body oversees the work of the school effectively and collects the necessary first-hand evidence to hold the school to account for what it achieves
 - ensuring, as a matter of urgency, that the school builds leadership capacity to enable staff to make a telling contribution to school improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Sutton Park Community Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22-23 February 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, middle leaders, the same group of parents and carers seen at the last monitoring visit, a group of Year 6 pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor from the learning and teaching group, and a representative from the local authority. Ten lessons were observed taught by ten of the fifteen teachers in the school. Four children were heard reading to the inspector, two from Year 2 and two from Year 6. The procedures for safeguarding pupils were also checked and judged to meet requirements.

Context

Since the last visit, one member of staff has left and two have decided to leave the school during and at the end of this term. Some middle management roles have been re-allocated to existing staff. The Mainstream Autism Base for the eight pupils with speech, language and Autistic Spectrum Disorders has been disrupted due to staffing turbulence and the Centre was temporarily closed as a result. Now that staffing in the Centre has been re-stabilised and enhanced, the pupils are returning on a phased basis. The previous Vice-Chair has become the Chair of the Governing Body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment remains below the national average in all key stages. However, robust school pupil progress tracking data demonstrates that the gap is narrowing and pupils are beginning to catch up in all classes. Across the school there is consistent evidence of satisfactory progress with reading standards due to the ongoing focus on reading, enhanced reading resources and the support from parents and carers. Teachers and other adults have listened to children reading more consistently and the home-school communication book remains a key tool for communicating progress and concerns with reading as well as other issues. Weaker readers in Year 2 are being well supported to develop their skills. While they struggle with fluency, they can confidently sound out letters and read unfamiliar words. In Year 6, those who are identified as weaker readers are provided with additional help to read more often and gain confidence with their reading ability. Additional reading material has been provided for older pupils in the library. Able readers in both key stages read with fluency, expression and enjoy extensive reading for pleasure at home.

Writing and mathematics have also improved in most classes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 demonstrate writing for a purpose, such as writing speeches for their nomination as

ruler of an imaginary kingdom, and extended fictional story writing on the computer to produce an impressive book of class stories for other children to enjoy.

Year 6 pupils are predicted to reach the minimum government standards for those pupils attaining Level 4 in both English and mathematics in the national tests this year. However, this is not the case for the percentage of pupils predicted to make the expected progress in English or in mathematics. A drive to improve progress in mathematics has focused on ensuring staff use appropriate subject vocabulary in lessons and are more aware of how pupils make progress in their calculation skills. Pupils, parents and carers report that they are more confident with mental calculations since the last visit, sometimes pupils are teaching their parents new methods of solving problems. Older pupils of all abilities were able to work out percentages in their heads and felt more confident with their times tables. Lesson observations demonstrated that they are learning more advanced strategies in mathematics, for example how to recognise whether a three and four digit number is a multiple of 3 or 4. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are experiencing a wider range of activities than before that are more purposefully linked to a theme and which develop their independent learning skills. For example, following work on the *Three Little Pigs* story, children were building houses with construction bricks and making house constructions with hay and sticks in the outdoor area.

There is insufficient evidence to report progress in science as this has not been a focus for the school since the last visit.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment in English, mathematics and science across the school, including in the areas of learning in the early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is still variable but improving, albeit slowly. Teaching staff are working hard and want to improve their teaching skills. Pupils are beginning to catch up with the national benchmarks, although there is still a way to go. This has been as a result of the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and a stronger focus on measuring and sharing pupil progress data with class teachers. The focus on improving attainment in mathematics has included staff training by the subject leader on progression in calculation skills and encouragement to use more specific mathematics language with the pupils. Staff and pupils are now more confident with mathematical concepts. Good support has been provided by the local authority through learning advisers to support individual teachers identified for specific support and the school has identified lead teachers from other schools to support developments. A teacher has been appointed for three days a week specifically trained to work with targeted

pupils to improve their individual attainment in mathematics. The 'Every Child Counts' scheme used with these pupils provides an appropriate structure, is well taught, and enjoyed by pupils. While improved attainment is not yet apparent with this identified group, they have significantly enhanced their confidence with using mathematical language and applying their learning to different practical mathematical resources.

Teachers were jointly observed by HMI and the headteacher as part of this monitoring visit. There remain inconsistencies. Ten lessons were observed and 80% were judged to be satisfactory or better, with 50% good or better; a marginal improvement since the last visit. The school has just failed to meet the 60% target for the percentage of good or better teaching set at the last monitoring visit. As before, there remains some inadequate teaching. However, teachers are now making more consistent use of the recent progress data they have for pupils in their class to make assessments and to plan more appropriate work that takes account of pupils' individual needs. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now given more appropriate tasks in lessons. Linked with the improved support provided by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to both pupils and staff, these pupils are now making similar progress to their peers, and remain more focused in lessons as they find the work more stimulating and appropriately challenging.

In the best lessons observed, pupils are excited about their work. Relationships with adults are strong, and they are proud of their achievements. They write extensively, with neat presentation, many older pupils using an ink pen. Lessons are well-planned and work meets the needs of all learners. Independent work is encouraged and pupils rise to the challenge of finding out things for themselves. In the less-successful lessons, the range of activities are dull and disjointed and not part of a planned progression of learning. Some pupils find the work too easy, while others do not understand worksheets or what they are supposed to be learning. While work is marked regularly in every class and teachers note points for improvement, there is little evidence in books that pupils are following up these suggestions in subsequent pieces of work. Learning is not checked enough during or at the end of lessons to inform teachers' planning for subsequent lessons.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory
- improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of all pupils – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils at break and lunchtimes has improved. Games are provided for children to use. On the day of the visit, chalks, skipping ropes and hoops were popular. There are currently still no playground markings so that pupils can initiate collaborative games that support and extend their learning in lessons. Lunchtime supervisors have received training to instigate and lead playground games and this is having some effect with some children. However, since the last visit, there have been two fixed-term exclusions of older boys who were unable to control their emotions. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory and on occasions is good with pupils willingly collaborating to support one another's learning. However, this is not the case when the work is too easy, the teacher talks too much or does not ask enough challenging questions to keep pupils focused.

The positive progress with improving attendance identified at the last visit continues. The national average for attendance in primary schools is 94.86%. At the last monitoring visit in October 2011, attendance at 96.7% was above the national average. This positive trend continues with attendance since September 2011 currently 95.3%, well above the 91.2% for the same period last year. The deputy headteacher continues to work hard with families with a history of poor attendance, and with some evidence of good impact. There continues to be a few families where persistent absence remains a challenge for the school and a cause for concern for the children's future economic well-being and transition to the next stage of their education. There is still a small, but considerably reduced number of pupils who are late for school. Compared with a similar figure last year, the number has dropped from an average of four a day to one.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the area for improvement:

- improve attendance – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last visit, there have been a number of challenging management issues that have frustrated quicker progress, although all have been dealt with well by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and local authority. The staffing issues within the Mainstream Autism Base led to pupils having to work at home. The communication between the school, parents and carers and the local authority was handled well and subsequently resolved. Enhanced staffing has now stabilised the base and pupils are beginning to get back into much-needed school routines. For some pupils, the early days of this re-integration and working with new staff and new ways of working is posing more of a problem than for others.

The recent introduction of the system of using average points score to measure pupil progress has been central to more focused assessment dialogue and, as such, is a key management tool. Pupil progress meetings now use clear and visual data graphs that chart pupil and class progress. This has enabled senior staff to hold

individual staff more to account for pupil progress, allocate appropriate remedial resources and measure the impact of management actions. Some of the roles and responsibilities of key staff have been re-allocated and support provided for the subject leader for mathematics to enable them to lead and manage their area with more confidence and authority. It is too early to judge the impact of these revised areas of responsibility on pupil outcomes. The mathematics coordinator has received good support for developing mathematics in the school from the headteacher, local authority, lead teachers from other schools and the introduction of the 'Every Child Counts' scheme of work for identified pupils. It remains to be seen if the coordinator will be able to sustain improvements when this level of additional support is removed. The SENCO and literacy coordinator have successfully demonstrated their leadership and management skills through a much stronger focus on staff awareness of individual provision maps and pupil needs. Specific support from the SENCO has focused on staff setting appropriate targets for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs within their own class.

School improvement planning has been redrafted and is now shorter and time-related. However, the success criteria are too vague and insufficiently focused on pupil outcomes that will drive the school forward at a quicker pace. There are currently lots of different plans and the overall improvement plan, while it includes staff training and external support, lacks cohesion.

The curriculum has developed since the last visit, with more purposeful open-ended projects linked to specific themes. For example, a cross-curricular topic linked to Christmas involved pupils in real-life situations. Older pupils prepared an outdoor area for the nativity play; made steps; decided how much cabling would be required for the lighting; costed, budgeted and bought it from a local superstore. Year 2 pupils were involved in writing the nativity play script and supporting Reception Year and Year 1 children learning words and performing the nativity. One parent commented, 'The children talked non-stop about this project.'

The governing body has received some good training from the local authority to help it take a more active part in monitoring and challenging the school's progress and performance. It now monitors the progress data of a group of six anonymous pupils from two classes to be able to challenge the headteacher. However, not all governors play a sufficiently active part in monitoring the progress the school is making.

Progress since the inspection in March 2011 on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership, management and governance - satisfactory

External support

Since the last visit, the support provided by the local authority has improved and is now more targeted and focused. There has been good support for the considerable staffing issues in the Mainstream Autism Base. The brokering of support for individual teachers to develop their teaching skills and for the mathematics subject leader to develop leadership and management skills through modelling of expectations by experienced subject leaders has been well-judged and appropriate. There has been an enhanced level of professional challenge and support from the local authority that has assisted the school well.

Immediate priorities for further improvement for the school are:

- ensuring that all teachers plan more lively learning episodes in lessons that are related to the overall learning intention and that challenge and engage pupils more.