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3 May 2012

Mrs S Ramsay
Headteacher
Eaton Valley Primary School
Dagger Lane
West Bromwich
B71 4BU

Dear Mrs Ramsay

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Eaton Valley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1–2 May 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 third 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Permission has been granted for the school to appoint up to three newly qualified teachers to commence duties on 1 September 2012 to work in Key Stages 1 and 2. Further 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 Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress across the school by:
 - monitoring pupils' progress rigorously by establishing clear assessment and tracking systems
 - ensuring that assessment data and progress tracking are used more effectively to ensure that all groups of pupils make good gains in their learning
 - ensuring that all pupils are set clear, individual targets for improvement in reading and mathematics, similar to those in writing, so they know what they are aiming to achieve
 - developing pupils' use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the range of curriculum subjects.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - developing teachers' use of assessment, including the use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and to identify the next steps in learning
 - developing teachers' awareness of the learning needs of different groups of pupils so that lesson planning takes full account of the range of abilities in each class
 - providing increased challenge for more-able pupils so that they achieve in line with their capabilities
 - helping pupils to develop independent learning skills.

- Strengthen the leadership, management and governance of the school by:
 - ensuring that all middle and subject leaders develop fully their skills in monitoring, data analysis and evaluation
 - ensuring that the governing body meets in full its statutory duties by monitoring, reviewing, updating and approving all required policies and procedures, particularly those relating to safeguarding
 - making readily available to parents and carers information on all relevant policies and procedures relating to child protection.

- Work with pupils, parents, carers and the education welfare officer to reduce unauthorised absence and improve attendance to the school's target of at least 94%.

Special measures: monitoring of Eaton Valley Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 1–2 May 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one teacher who was absent on maternity leave and another who was absent through illness have returned to work. One teacher remains on maternity leave and another teacher remains absent through illness. The governing body has appointed three new teachers and one new senior leader who will take responsibility for Key Stage 2. The senior leader will commence duties in June and the new teachers will start in September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress continues to accelerate across the school, and in some classes it is improving rapidly. Weaknesses in pupils' skills, especially in writing, are being successfully addressed through a number of small-group support strategies and one-to-one teaching. Teachers' improved use of assessment information is enabling them to match work more closely to pupils' needs. More rigorous monitoring of the progress made by disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals is helping to accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils. However, there still remain some inconsistencies in pupils' progress in different classes, mainly due to the instability caused by staff absence over the past year. Although pupils' attainment remains low in writing and below average in reading and mathematics, it is rising and the gaps between the attainment of all groups of pupils in this school and similar groups nationally are closing.

The school has recently revised its policy for pupils' targets for improvement. The targets are now easily accessible and pupils refer to them when asked, but very few know their targets and teachers do not provide enough opportunities in lessons for pupils to practise the skills or apply the knowledge identified in the targets. Nearly all teachers are now taking opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum.

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

- raise attainment and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress across the school – good.

The quality of teaching

In lessons, pupils show good attitudes to learning and work together well. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and supportive. Pupils with identified behavioural difficulties are handled well by teachers and learning support assistants so that incidents of disruption are minimal. In lessons where teachers make clear to the learning support assistants what they want pupils to learn and give them strategies to help them work with pupils, the learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

Staff training and support from the local authority and partner school have resulted in significant improvements to the quality of teaching since the last monitoring inspection. One teacher is taking part in an outstanding teaching programme and is using the skills gained to improve her teaching. Regular monitoring by senior leaders of the quality of teachers' planning is helping to ensure that teachers are now more consistently planning work that is matched to the needs of pupils of all levels of attainment. More-able pupils are increasingly receiving a higher level of challenge in lessons. As a result, there is now a higher proportion of good teaching, and during this inspection some outstanding teaching was observed.

However, the reason why pupils' progress is not accelerating even more rapidly is that approximately half the teaching is still no better than satisfactory and a very small minority remains inadequate. This is partly because some teachers have been absent for considerable periods of time over the past year and, consequently, have not had access to the training and support received by most other teachers. Where teaching is less than good it is mainly because pupils are given activities that have no clear learning focus, their learning is not sufficiently structured, and teachers do not regularly check on pupils' understanding.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Although there have been significant improvements in pupils' attendance rates since the school was placed into special measures, improvements have slowed since the last monitoring inspection. Nevertheless, the senior leadership team and the governing body are continually seeking ways of ensuring higher attendance. A revised administering of medicines policy has recently been implemented to discourage parents and carers from keeping their children at home to take medicines. Class attendance percentages are published half-termly and a range of rewards are given to pupils for regular attendance. Although school information shows that current attendance remains low at 93.3% and similar to last term, it is 2% higher than for the same period last year. The proportion of unauthorised

absences has decreased from 2.2% last year to 1.5% since the start of the current school year. Senior leaders track the attendance of different groups of pupils and, working with welfare agencies, identify where support is needed. The attendance of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has improved, but it remains low at 90.7%. Improving the attendance of this group of pupils represents the greatest attendance challenge for senior leaders and the governing body.

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

- reduce unauthorised absence and improve attendance – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Regular and systematic monitoring of pupils' progress, additional support for those pupils who are not on course to meet their targets and a rigorous programme of staff training are the main reasons why the school is improving. All senior leaders now play important roles in leading staff training, analysing tracking information, observing lessons, monitoring teachers' planning and checking on pupils' work in books. Leaders write and lead plans for improvement for identified areas. All the plans are detailed, although most do not have measurable outcomes that focus on improving pupils' achievement. Consequently, the impact of specific improvement strategies cannot be rigorously monitored and evaluated.

Since the last monitoring inspection, the teacher with responsibility for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has provided training for the learning support assistants, monitored and evaluated their work and set targets for improvement. The literacy leader has implemented a new systematic programme for improving pupils' understanding and use of phonics. The governing body has continued to extend its contact with the school through individual governors establishing links with certain classes, talking to the pupils, visiting lessons and feeding back any findings to the full governing body.

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

- strengthen the leadership, management and governance of the school – good.

External support

The school has continued to receive strong support from the local authority, mainly through the school improvement adviser and the staff of the partner school. The time is now right for the senior leaders of the school to take even more responsibility for planning and delivering school improvement strategies.