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31 May 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 29–30 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 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 third monitoring inspection on 29–30 May 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, middle leaders, the same group of parents seen at the last monitoring visit, a group of five Year 6 pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Two children were heard reading to the inspector, one from Year 2 and one from Year 6. Behaviour was observed in lessons and on the playground. Twelve lessons were observed, taught by 12 of the thirteen teachers in the school. The procedures for safeguarding pupils were also checked and found to meet requirements. Some inspection activities were curtailed on the second day of the monitoring visit due to an electricity failure, and parents were requested not to bring their children to school until the afternoon session.

Context

Since the last visit, there have been further staffing changes, although far fewer than in the past. Staffing is becoming more stable. A new teacher has been appointed to the mainstream autism base and a newly qualified teacher to Year 3. The secondment of an advanced skills teacher to the Reception Year has been extended. The seconded deputy headteacher has secured a headship post to begin in September 2012 and a new permanent deputy headteacher has been appointed to replace him. The mathematics coordinator has decided to resign with effect from the end of the summer term 2012. No pupils have left the school and two have joined since the last visit.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils join the Nursery with attainment below that expected for their age. Accurate school data now clearly shows that, year on year, as they move through the school, the attainment gap between pupils at Sutton Park and national expectations is closing rapidly. The school is improving quickly. Attainment remains below the national average in most classes, except Year 6, where, for the first time, it is expected that the pupils will attain above the national average in the English and mathematics tests. The school is expected to meet the government floor targets, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. Progress in mathematics and English has accelerated rapidly in most classes since the last visit. This is due to:

- improved teaching quality
- a greater understanding by teachers of pupil progress data
- more regular assessment and marking of pupil's work

- teachers planning more appropriate work to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities in their class
- higher expectations of pupil outcomes in all lessons.

Inconsistencies and inaccuracies in teacher assessments have been identified and rectified since the last visit. Current school data has accurately identified weaknesses in Years 3 and 4 with writing and across the school with place value in mathematics. Appropriate interventions have followed to enable pupils to catch up. Girls, and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, continue to make better progress than the boys and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Raising attainment in science has not been a priority for improvement for the school since the last visit so, as before, there is insufficient evidence to be able to report progress.

Pupils have made faster progress in mathematics due to an enhanced use of subject vocabulary and more individual support for teachers to help them accurately assess pupils' work. Pupils are now more confident in their use and understanding of mathematics vocabulary. Identified pupils in Years 2 and 3 follow a very successful intervention programme. Individual pupils have made as much as 21 months progress during the four month period of the programme, where mathematics concepts are re-visited and consolidated. Discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils also demonstrated greater understanding of key mathematics concepts. They are able to multiply, divide, subtract and add numbers with much more confidence. Regular spelling tests continue in English for all classes and there is clear evidence among Year 6 pupils in spelling more complex words, for example some that have silent sounding letters. Pupils report that lessons are now more interesting and challenging and that they look forward to coming to school each day. Reading skills have also improved. The weakest readers now read with much greater confidence and more fluency. The books they are reading are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Another reason for the faster progress in all classes is that the curriculum across the school has developed and improved. Topics are more interlinked and exciting. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, topics are planned with purposeful activities both inside and increasingly outside the classroom; some children working with the teacher and some learning independently. For example, building bug dens out of scrap pieces of wood or larger dens, helped by enthusiastic teaching assistants. During this monitoring visit, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were fully engaged in a 'Titanic Day' where they were dressed up as passengers on the fateful cruise liner. With the teacher dressed as a judge, they used persuasive language to apportion blame for the ship's sinking. Year 6 pupils were off-site for some of the day, engaged in a young citizen challenge, working with personnel from the emergency services.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection 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 – good.

The quality of teaching

Teaching quality and consistency have improved since the last visit, when half the lessons were judged to be good or better. A recent review by the local authority earlier in May 2012, judged that 90% were good or better. On this monitoring visit, where all teachers, with the exception of one part-time member of staff, were jointly observed with a member of the school's senior management team, 50% were judged to be good or better, similar to the previous monitoring visit. However, data evidence of the increased pupil progress, discussion with pupils, and the quality of work in pupils' books, suggest that teaching quality is improving. This is due to a shared determination to improve teaching, a stronger ethos of learning throughout the school and greater consistency between classes. In all lessons, relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. In the best lessons, pupils are challenged to find out things for themselves and are totally engaged in their learning. They take pride in their work and know they are making progress. In the less successful lessons, the learning intentions are not clear enough and there are some missed opportunities for learning. The pace of learning is too slow and teachers do not create enough opportunities to pull the class together to check that all pupils understand the work and have made progress with their learning.

Procedures for the care, guidance and support for all pupils have improved due to much more appropriate planning by all teachers to ensure that the work takes account of the full range of abilities in their class. Sutton Park is an inclusive school. For example, work is now carefully designed to meet the needs of the pupils and their inclusion into classes from the mainstream autism base. The accurate assessments made by the special educational needs coordinator ensures that all teachers are fully aware of the needs of individual pupils and plan accordingly. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, taking account of their lower starting points. Children in the mainstream language unit and those in the Wyre Forest Nursery language unit make similar progress to their peers due to the skilful teaching they receive. On this visit, children from the language units were much more confident to talk to HMI and excited to share their work, using longer sentences and greater clarity in their speech.

The culture of poor attendance and condoned absence by parents and carers is changing in the school. Attendance has sustained its broadly similar trend since the last visit. Current whole-school attendance measured from September 2011 is 94.9%, in line with the national average. At the last visit, attendance was judged to be above the national average. Attendance figures hover around this average/above average point due to the erratic attendance of a very few families known to and

supported by the school. The deputy headteacher works proactively with these families to explain the negative impact of poor attendance on attainment and their child's future life chances. It is a credit to his work that the number of persistent absentees and those who are regularly late for school continues to fall. More pupils now want to come to school. Good attendance is celebrated. Fourteen pupils have 100% attendance since the start of September 2011.

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

- improve procedures for the care, guidance and support of all pupils – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons is good. Outside, pupils play well with each other and individuals from the autism base and the language unit are appropriately integrated into play activities when it is considered they are able to cope with the larger number of children. The more stable staffing in the school has resulted in pupils being more settled due to the greater consistency of staff expectations of behaviour across the school. The school is a safer place now for all pupils. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions since the last monitoring visit. Good liaison has already been established with the local secondary school to ensure that those pupils who may require additional support to settle in their new school have been identified. Strategies are in place for their transition in September.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The ambitious drive and high expectations of the headteacher, well-supported by the seconded deputy headteacher, has been successful in accelerating pupil progress and raising staff morale. There remain pockets of good middle leadership, although inconsistencies are currently hampering more rapid and consistent progress across the school. Leadership of English and special educational needs remains strong. Mathematics has had a history of more fragile leadership which still remains unresolved, despite individual pieces of good development, for example the progression document of mathematical skills throughout the school. The newly appointed deputy headteacher taking up post in September 2012 is due to lead on this important area.

Other key roles have stabilised since the last visit, including the lead teacher of the mainstream autism base, which is now filled by a highly-skilled full-time teacher. Within the Early Years Foundation Stage, the leadership by a seconded advanced skills teacher has now been extended for a further two years. This has provided a clearer balance of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to ensure that children develop the essential skills required to be able to make a smooth transition

to Key Stage 1. Early Years Foundation Stage assessments are now more accurate and useful.

The use of assessment across the school has become more embedded and used by staff every day. The tracking of pupil progress is now regular and accurate, providing clear information to class teachers, senior leaders and the governing body to inform future development needs. This notwithstanding, whole-school short-term planning is still not sharp or measurable enough to be able to provide the governing body with sufficient information to be able to hold the headteacher fully to account. The governing body has become more involved in monitoring and supporting the work of the school, although minutes of past meetings show that some governors do not regularly attend scheduled meetings.

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

- improve leadership, management and governance – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. Its regular reviews of progress and support by learning and teaching advisers are appreciated by the school and carefully negotiated for maximum impact. For example, there has been good support for the two newly qualified teachers.

Immediate priorities for further improvement for the school are:

- rigorously monitor and support teaching quality to ensure that 80% is consistently good or better.