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5 July 2012

Mrs J Kersh
Acting Headteacher
Stockton Heath Primary School
West Avenue
Stockton Heath
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6HX

Dear Mrs Kersh

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 July 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 June 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 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 Warrington.

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Additional Inspector

January 2012



Annex

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

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - using information about the progress of different groups effectively to set challenging targets for improvement
 - making staff accountable for the progress pupils make
 - ensuring all staff provide work that builds on pupils' prior learning in order to improve their achievement.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information consistently to set work that effectively challenges different groups, especially the more-able
 - improving feedback and marking so that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - delegating leadership and management responsibilities among staff and ensuring that all leaders are fully involved in promoting school improvement
 - ensuring self-evaluation is accurate and provides a firm basis for long-term planning for improvement
 - rigorously monitoring teaching and learning to provide a clear picture of their quality throughout the school.

- Improve the behaviour of pupils in the designated unit by:
 - developing and embedding robust procedures for managing behaviour so that pupils and staff are safe at all times and learning can proceed without distractions.

- Improve provision and pupils' progress in the designated unit by:
 - improving the expertise of staff in meeting the specific needs of individual pupils
 - ensuring that ongoing assessments of individual pupil's progress are rigorous so that specific next steps in learning can be set.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including 12 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were conducted jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher, pupils from Key Stage 2 and the newly appointed substantive headteacher for the autumn term. The inspector analysed pupils' work and a range of school documentation. The provision for and achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage was not a focus of this monitoring inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the acting headteacher, seconded from a local primary school for two terms, has returned to his school. A substantive headteacher has been appointed for the start of the autumn term 2012. A headteacher seconded from a local primary school for four days a week has led the school during the summer term. Three teachers have resigned. Six new teachers have been appointed; one of these teachers has already commenced teaching at the school and the other five will begin at the start of the autumn term 2012. Currently, three classes are being taught by temporary teachers.

The designated provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder was closed by the local authority after the inspection of June 2011. Consequently, the two final areas for improvement in the annex to this letter, which relate specifically to the designated provision, are now not applicable and have not been reported on.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last monitoring inspection, the school's assessments of pupils' attainment have become significantly more accurate. This has provided school leaders and individual teachers with a much clearer view of the rates of progress being made by individual pupils and different groups of pupils. In response, more focused action has been planned and taken to raise achievement generally, and more specifically for individuals and groups of pupils identified as still underachieving. Targets are challenging and to this end all staff clearly recognise that they are accountable for the progress of pupils in their class.

The school's data show that the gap between those pupils who are making good progress and those who are underachieving continues to narrow. However, inconsistency remains between year groups, parallel classes within year groups and between subjects within individual classes. By and large, within this inconsistent picture, an increasing number of pupils are making the rapid progress needed to reach their academic potential. However,

too many pupils are still not progressing at a fast enough rate in reading, writing and mathematics. While pupils' variable progress and underachievement in these subjects is evident at both key stages, throughout the school underachievement continues to be more marked in mathematics. School leaders are fully aware of the variable picture of achievement. This includes an astute awareness of gaps between groups of pupils within school and compared to pupils nationally, including between boys and girls, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Very good use is being made of the improved data to plan and focus action to drive further improvements to pupils' achievement and to narrow these gaps.

The quality of teaching pupils receive, as reflected by inspection evidence from lesson observations, analysis of pupils' work and a review of the school's own monitoring of teaching and learning, remains a significant factor in pupils' variable progress. The way in which key aspects of the curriculum have, historically, been delivered by teachers has also limited pupils from achieving as well as they should. However, since the last monitoring inspection good improvements have been made to the curriculum provision for reading and mathematics and these are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

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

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

While the quality of teaching remains inconsistent, some improvements have occurred. Close to half of the teaching observed during this monitoring inspection was good or better, with almost a fifth judged to be outstanding. Just under half of the teaching was satisfactory and a small proportion was inadequate. In some of the lessons where teaching was satisfactory, good features were noted and the teaching quality was approaching 'good'. However, in others insufficient improvement had occurred from the previous monitoring inspection. In these lessons, and where teaching was inadequate, the weaknesses impeded pupils' learning and progress. This finding was corroborated by evidence from pupils' workbooks and the school's own monitoring of teaching and learning. Pupils' views about the typical quality of teaching that they experience and their own success as learners mirror the inconsistent picture shown by inspection evidence and the school's own rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes. The most significant remaining weakness of inadequate and satisfactory teaching is in relation to teachers not meeting the range of pupils' needs. Specifically, teachers' explanations, questioning and provision of work for pupils to complete is either insufficiently challenging for the more-able pupils or/and too difficult for lower attainers. In other situations, the provision of work does not recognise or take sufficient account of pupils' stage of conceptual development and therefore reflects unrealistic expectations of pupils' capabilities.

In the majority of lessons the pace of teaching and learning has shown good improvement. Similarly, teachers' improved knowledge and use of assessment data has resulted in more

consistency in the way differentiated planning is implemented in practice. Teachers' use of ongoing assessment, including involving pupils in assessing their own learning, has become much better. In lessons where these features are strong, pupils learn well and their interest and engagement in lessons is high. Where teachers talk for too long or wait too long to check on how well pupils are progressing with the set work, the pupils lose interest, do not listen or apply themselves well enough to their work and sometimes misbehave.

Improvements are occurring to the way reading is taught. This has resulted from the increasingly high profile given to this aspect of English, which has included intensive training for all teachers. A notable improvement was also evident in the teaching of mathematics, particularly in relation to different calculation strategies and increased opportunities for pupils to undertake mathematical investigations linked to 'real life' situations. During the inspection, examples of investigations included pupils planning various aspects of a family holiday, with problems becoming increasingly complex as the investigation progressed, and working to a budget to order classroom resources and play equipment. Some exceptionally good learning was evident for Year 2 pupils who relished the fast pace and challenging work provided. Pupils' views are that mathematics is now 'better' and 'more fun'; many reflected that mathematics is now one of their favourite subjects.

While some very effective use and impact of support staff was observed, the quality of this resource in supporting teaching and promoting pupils' learning continues to be variable. Overall, the marking of pupils' work remains a good feature that is helping pupils to understand how they can improve.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The majority of pupils behave well in lessons. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes and interest in lessons are primarily dictated by the success of teachers in providing them with work that motivates and interests them. When this happens the pupils are enthusiastic and throw themselves wholeheartedly into their work. This was very evident in a highly industrious design and technology lesson in Year 6 and in group investigations in mathematics and science. Pupils' views on behaviour are mainly positive. They report occasional inappropriate behaviour in lessons, but more frequent inappropriate behaviour during play times and particularly at lunchtime. They recognise and appreciate teachers' caring and friendly approach and spoke of teachers' patience when some pupils misbehave. However, pupils reflected a clear sense of injustice at how behaviour is managed at lunchtime because not all lunchtime supervisors listen to and act upon concerns that they might express.



The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last monitoring inspection much more robust procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have been implemented. These reflect the relentless focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement. The range of monitoring activities has been extended considerably, providing greater and increasingly secure information to support more accurate school self-evaluation. The information has also enabled school leaders to target support where the need is greatest. The impact has been notable in terms of quickly reducing the proportion of inadequate teaching and assuring teaching of a securely good standard where previously weaknesses were evident. The increased rigour of monitoring has also enabled more precise identification of relevant training for staff, both in relation to individual and whole-school needs, all of which is beginning to pay off. Greater accuracy in teachers' assessments has been assured through a range of external and internal moderation strategies. The increased range of assessment information has been interrogated more thoroughly and critically than previously, which has allowed leaders to make informed decisions about where to target intervention to maximise improvements. The impact is beginning to be seen in improvements to pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching.

The structure of the senior leadership team from the start of the autumn term has now been finalised. The within-school appointment of a new leader for mathematics adds to the developing strength of the current team, which will be led by the new substantive headteacher. The recruitment processes for new staff, including the headteacher, have been extremely rigorous, reflecting governors' high expectations for continued improvement. The planned organisation for subject coordination, which is a new role for many teachers, has been finalised. Some training for this role has already occurred and more is planned in preparation for the start of the autumn term focusing on the involvement of coordinators in monitoring provision and outcomes to promote improvement. A curriculum working party of staff and governors has finalised the school's organisation of a new, enquiry-based, curriculum. This is to be implemented at the start of the autumn term, with subject coordination roles and responsibilities aligned to match the structure of the new curriculum. Governors continue to support the school and provide robust challenge. They have been significantly involved in the appointment of the new headteacher and teaching staff. Via the various committees, governors also have a high profile in personnel issues, finance and monitoring the school's standard and performance.

Although a number of initiatives are still at an early stage of development, the changes and actions that have occurred are having a positive impact and are clearly starting to strengthen the school's future capacity for improvement.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management – good

External support

The local authority continues to provide good quality support for the school. The School Improvement Partner is a regular visitor offering astute challenge and well focused support and advice. Brokered support from external consultants has been well targeted and mostly effective.