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Joanne Raybould
Bridgtown Primary School
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Cannock
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Dear Mrs Raybould

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bridgtown Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13–14 November 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 on 25 January 2012. 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 Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers make good use of assessment information to plan lessons that are effective in meeting the needs of all groups of pupils
 - making better use of marking and pupils' personal targets to raise aspirations and guide pupils in their learning
 - increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the impact of actions rigorously to inform strategic planning
 - developing the ability of the governing body to hold leaders firmly to account for pupils' levels of attainment and progress
 - setting realistic and challenging targets for pupils that raise expectations for their performance.

- Renew efforts to work purposefully with parents and carers to improve punctuality and raise pupils' attendance to at least the national average by April 2013.

Special measures: monitoring of Bridgtown Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 13–14 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including nine lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, groups of pupils, three representatives of the governing body and the Local Leader of Education who is supporting the school. A telephone conversation was also held with a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit the school community has been devastated by the death of two members of staff. The restructuring of the school leadership team is now complete. Two teachers have resigned. One teacher left the school during the summer and the second will leave his class teaching post at the end of the autumn term. Five new governors have been appointed leaving just one parent governor vacancy to be filled. The governing body is considering the benefits of converting to an academy. The school continues to be supported by a Local Leader of Education from another Staffordshire primary school. The number of pupils on roll has reduced to 200 at the start of this academic year.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good teaching and learning help children make good progress particularly in physical, personal and social development. The proportion reaching the expected level for their age in calculation, communication, language and literacy is below average, but increasing. The 2012 unvalidated data show that leaders secured some improvement in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. More pupils, mainly girls, attained the expected level. The picture was mixed at the end of Key Stage 2 where attainment overall was broadly similar to that of the previous year in reading and writing. It was lower in mathematics. Too few pupils made sufficient progress from their starting points at the beginning of the key stage. There is a considerable way to go to improve the achievement of boys and groups such as those known to be eligible for free school meals throughout the school.

Significant underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics remains in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school's data and pupils' work clearly show that too many pupils are not achieving as much as they could. However, there are promising signs of recovery. Improvements in teaching and learning are beginning to plug some of the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. The range, volume and quality of work that pupils are expected to complete is also increasing. Programmes to raise attainment

in phonics to improve pupils' knowledge of letter sounds, spelling and vocabulary and to develop mental mathematics skills are being systematically implemented. Increased opportunities are being provided for pupils to write at length in literacy lessons and in other subjects such as science and topic work. The 'fresh start' programme is also providing increased opportunities for writing. Pupils' punctuation and presentation is improving with more taking a greater pride in their work. Strategies such as the boys' achievement project are also proving beneficial. Together, these are beginning to narrow the gap between what pupils are attaining and what they are capable of.

The quality of teaching

Teaching quality is improving steadily for the majority of pupils with the proportion of good teaching increasing. During this visit good teaching was evident in two-thirds of the lessons seen. The other third requires improvement. Most 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. Teachers have established clear expectations so that lessons operate effectively. Regular lesson visits by senior staff and local authority advisers provide useful feedback for teachers and pointers for improvement.

The most effective teaching is dynamic, practical, interesting and engaging. The pace of class discussions is focused, purposeful and productive. As a result, pupils are motivated and inspired to work hard. This was typically the case in the Key Stage 1 phonics lessons. 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' lack of precision when planning, drawing and labelling graphs or lack of confidence and perseverance when tackling more complex problems reduced their progress in lessons. Occasionally teachers do not intervene quickly enough when pupils are off-task or carry out activities incorrectly. The support provided by teaching assistants in lessons is variable. Some are too passive and do not provide the necessary support for individual or groups of pupils to help move their thinking or learning on.

Assessment information is being better used to inform weekly planning. The use of targets in English and mathematics has improved since the last monitoring inspection and most pupils are aware of them. Peer and self-assessment strategies are increasingly being used by pupils to evaluate their learning in lessons. The school's marking policy is consistently applied. Teachers provide clear guidance for pupils which helps them understand how well they have done and what they need to do to get better.

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

- Improve achievement by ensuring teachers make better use of assessment information, marking, targets and increase opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance has improved. This term it has risen to 93.9%, which is just below the national average. The strong support for parents and carers of pupils who have too much time off school has reduced the proportion of pupils who are classed as being persistently absent, although the school rightly recognises that more work is needed to reduce this proportion further. Punctuality in the morning has also improved due to measures taken by the school to highlight the issue. Improved communication and partnership between the school and parents and carers, coupled with strategies such as first day absence calls, home visits and giving attendance a high profile in school, are proving successful. Pupils like the weekly rewards, certificates for good attendance and the prize draw. All these have proved to be effective incentives. The local authority's Travellers' liaison officer has visited the local Traveller site to promote good attendance and the education welfare officer has worked closely with the school to support events such as target days and attendance clinics.

Most pupils enjoy their learning. This was evident in the Nursery where children listened with rapt attention to the story of 'Rama and Sita' and participated in actions and activities with great enthusiasm. Most pupils contribute well to lessons and show a clear understanding of classroom routines. They work together well in pairs or larger groups to support each other's learning. Most pupils behave sensibly in the corridors between lessons and in the playground. The majority of pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. The overwhelming majority of those parents and carers spoken to before the start of the school day say that they are happy with the school, their children are making good progress and they find all staff approachable. The Parents' Forum is a good conduit for parents and carers to share their views and ideas about the school with staff and governors.

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

- Improve punctuality and raise pupils' attendance to at least the national average by April 2013 – satisfactory

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

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. Decisive action, such as implementing a regular assessment regime, is providing leaders with more accurate and reliable data. Tracking systems have been established which chart pupils' progress. Outcomes are

being shared with teachers at half-termly pupil progress meetings to help them identify those pupils or groups making insufficient progress. Initiatives are monitored rigorously through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and regular assessments. 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 the Early Years Foundation Stage, literacy and mathematics provide good leadership for their area or subject. 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, the coordinator for mathematics has worked intensively with teachers in Years 3 and 4. The literacy coordinator has successfully led the implementation of the phonics strategy in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. The Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has devised and implemented a new tracking framework to take account of the recent changes in the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. Several new initiatives are planned for implementation such as assertive mentoring for mathematics and behaviour.

The governing body is playing its part. Governors are increasing their involvement in the school and they are increasingly holding the school's leaders to account for standards and quality. New governors have brought a fresh vitality and impetus to meetings. Initial training and support has been provided by the local authority. Newly appointed governors are keen to attend additional training so they can increase their confidence and ability to further challenge the school's leaders.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory

External support

Good support has been provided by the local authority's literacy and numeracy consultants, and education welfare and Traveller liaison officers. The Local Leader in Education continues to provide effective support for the school's leaders. Bridgtown staff have visited her school and worked with her staff on specific projects such as how to provide extended writing opportunities in the curriculum. The six-weekly post-Ofsted action plan meetings have continued to maintain the school's focus on school improvement and helped target and address identified weaknesses.

Priorities for further improvement

- Provide further training for teaching assistants on how they support teaching and learning effectively

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- Ensure new governors get access to further training and support so that they can further increase their understanding and hold the school leaders to account for standards and quality.