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13 December 2012

Mr Dan Harding
Headteacher
Stockton Heath Primary School
West Avenue
Stockton Heath
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6HX

Dear Mr Harding

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School

Following my visit with Susan Barkway (Additional Inspector), to your school on 11 and 12 December 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 fourth 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 Strategic 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 December 2012

Evidence

The inspectors observed the school's work, including 14 lessons or parts of lessons, five of which were conducted jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Discussions were held with senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions were held with pupils during lessons and at breaktimes. The inspectors analysed pupils' work and a range of school documentation, including the results of a recent parental survey conducted by the school.

Context

The new substantive headteacher took up his appointment in September 2012. At the same time, five new teachers began at the school. Two of these teachers are permanent appointments and the others are being employed for specific periods, for example, to cover a teacher on maternity leave. Since the last monitoring inspection one teacher has left the school. During this monitoring inspection two teachers were absent. These teachers' classes were 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

The school's most recent Year 6 test results improved slightly from the previous year and reflected that these pupils made adequate progress overall from the end of Key Stage 1. Attainment in English remained broadly average. Most pupils made the expected progress in writing, but fewer pupils than nationally made the expected progress in reading. In both aspects, only a very small number of pupils made better than expected progress. The results show that pupils' achievement in English is still not good as it should be. However, they reflect the school's success in stemming significant earlier underachievement, particularly in writing. Moreover, the reading results do not reflect the improvements made during the last two terms to the way reading is taught and which are helping pupils throughout the school to develop better skills than previously in this area. The picture in mathematics was more positive than in English and the impact of the school's work towards eradicating pupils' earlier underachievement is evident. Pupils' mathematics results were above average, with more than half the pupils reaching a level above that expected for their age. From their earlier attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' progress in mathematics was adequate. While few pupils made better than expected progress, more pupils than nationally made the

expected progress. At Key Stage 2, the school has been very successful in closing the gap between the small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs, and pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, and other pupils. The most recent Year 6 test results for these groups of pupils show that they made very good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attained far better than the same groups nationally. Overall, the most recent end of Key Stage 2 English and mathematics test results reflect the successful impact of the school's work to improve pupils' achievement. However, current achievement in English and mathematics across Key Stage 2 remains variable. This is because the quality of teaching is not good enough to enable all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

Year 2 pupils attained broadly average standards in the 2012 reading, writing and mathematics assessments. However, these results reflected a further decline in achievement from the previous year and significant underachievement of boys in reading and writing. Girls achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils with special educational needs significantly underachieved in relation to other pupils and the same group nationally, especially in reading and writing. Similarly, those pupils whose circumstances made them vulnerable also underachieved in these aspects. The end of Key Stage 1 assessments exposed the significant disruptions to, and weaknesses in, teaching that pupils experienced during their time in Key Stage 1. The staffing situation at this key stage has been stabilised and inspection evidence shows that most pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now progressing well in all aspects of their work. The continuously effective use the school is making of the more accurate assessment information it has about individuals and groups of pupils is enabling support to be carefully targeted to those pupils who have fallen behind with their learning. Although the quality of this support is not yet consistently good, the impact was evident as many of these pupils were observed using a good range of strategies, including effective use of phonics (the sounds letters make), to help them read and write. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to make very good progress in all aspects of their learning.

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

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

The quality of teaching

The profile of teaching from lesson observations during this monitoring inspection was not as positive as previously. However, the indications are that this does not represent a decline but rather a delay, as new staff are still getting to know pupils' capabilities and adjusting to the very high expectations of the school's leaders and managers for the rate at which pupils' learning must move forward. During this monitoring inspection, the proportion of teaching judged to 'require improvement' increased and the proportion judged as good declined. However, a number of the lessons that required improvement had good features and where teaching of this quality was seen at Key Stage 1, it was not indicative of the mostly good quality of teaching that pupils in this key stage generally receive. Just over a quarter of the teaching was good or outstanding. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in Key

Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good and outstanding teaching are consistent features from all of the staff.

Teaching quality at Key Stage 2 is more variable than in the rest of the school. Checks on pupils' work and the school's comprehensive and accurate checks on teaching show that some inadequate teaching remains at this key stage. One of the most significant and continuing weaknesses in lessons that require improvement is that pupils are not given work that is matched well enough to their capabilities, particularly more-able pupils. Another is that some teachers are still taking up too much of the lesson time by talking for too long, which limits the time pupils have to work things out for themselves. Occasionally, teachers try to include too many new ideas and activities in a lesson, which confuses pupils and hinders their learning.

In the best lessons, teachers' expert subject knowledge and detailed understanding of pupils' capabilities enables them to provide work that gets the best out of them all. Pupils learn quickly because teachers give them plenty of time to get involved in the tasks. While pupils are working, teachers keep checking on their progress to make sure that any who are struggling get extra help and that those who learn quickly get extra work to challenge them further. This high level of teaching was seen in mathematics lessons for more-able pupils in Years 2 and 6. In Year 2, the teacher enabled pupils to gain an excellent understanding of how to find fractions of numbers and how to use what they already knew about multiplication and repeated addition to help them. In the Year 6 lesson, which was part of an extended real-life project linked to the development of the playground, learning began the instant the pupils walked through the door. They chanted multiples of decimals and were able to use and apply mathematical knowledge and skills very well to represent information on pie-charts, both as fractions and degrees.

Throughout the school, most teachers' subject knowledge is secure and their assessments of pupils are becoming increasingly accurate. They have good relationships with pupils and mark their work regularly, providing generally good information to tell pupils how they can improve. The work of support staff is more consistently effective than previously. However, while some of these staff at Key Stage 1 make a very good contribution to pupils' learning, for example in supporting their reading skills, others are not teaching reading and writing skills well enough to the small groups of vulnerable pupils they supervise.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to behave very well in lessons and as they move around the school. Pupils reported that there had been improvements to behaviour at lunchtimes and to the way in which lunchtime supervisors deal with incidences of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are clear that bullying is unacceptable and none of the pupils spoken to expressed any concerns

about behaviour of this nature. Following an anti-bullying assembly the previous week, a lesson in Year 5 helped pupils to develop their understanding of different types of bullying.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new headteacher has maintained and built upon previous improvements in leadership and management. Combined with the well-established strengths of the deputy headteacher and the quickly developing skills of the other members of the newly restructured leadership team, the school is rapidly developing its capacity to improve without significant external support. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are regular and rigorous, with comprehensive and accurate information being gained from formal observations, regular 'drop ins' to lessons, analysis of pupils' work and the school's detailed assessment data. The message that nothing less than good will do has been clearly established. Teachers are fully aware that they are accountable for pupils' progress. The priority is rightly focused on quickly improving the most significant weaknesses in teaching that are preventing pupils from making good progress, but none go unchecked. Training needs specific to individual teachers, as well as to whole-school priorities, have been quickly and astutely identified and put in place.

The in-house expertise of the school's Early Years Foundation Stage leader, working alongside specialist outside support, has been central to the good improvements in teaching and the organisation of activities particularly in Year 1. The headteacher has also ensured training for new senior leaders so that aspects of leadership and management can be deployed to them and all are able to play the part they should in driving forward improvements. A particularly effective start has been made in mathematics, which has been the focus this term. This new leader now has a very informed view of the quality of teaching and of where support is most needed to ensure pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching improves. Acting upon the findings of the last monitoring inspection, the headteacher has restructured lunchtimes, providing training for midday supervisors, establishing pupil 'playground buddies', and ensuring a good range of play activities to make this period a happier and safer time for pupils. He has sought parents' views through meetings and a survey and acted upon these, for example, by putting in place daily handwriting sessions to improve pupils' presentation of work. Parents very much appreciate the headteacher's high profile around the school and his willingness to listen to their views. The headteacher's reports to the governors ensure that they are well informed about pupils' outcomes, the quality of provision and the progress of improvement initiatives. The governors continue to provide good challenge to leaders and managers.

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 very good support for the school. Weekly visits from the School Improvement Partner provide a very good level of challenge for school leaders

and validate the accuracy of their checks on the quality of teaching and learning. Excellent mentoring support has been provided for developing the leadership skills of the new mathematics leader. Externally brokered support from an independent consultancy agency has also had an effective impact on mentoring individual teachers and helping to improve the quality of provision for Year 1 pupils.