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Ms A Bufton
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Dear Ms Bufton

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ANDERTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Fiona Robinson and John Collings, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 1 and 2 November 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers, the Every Child Matters (ECM) manager, the information and communication coordinator, members of the administrative staff, the chair of governors, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since being placed in special measures, eight teachers including the headteacher and deputy headteacher have left the school. One teacher is currently on long term sick leave. An acting headteacher took up her post at

the start of the summer term 2006 and was supported by an acting deputy headteacher, seconded from another school, for the second half of the summer term and the first half of the autumn term. The acting headteacher has been appointed as substantive headteacher from the start of the autumn term 2006. A substantive deputy headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in January 2007. Nine out of 33 teaching posts are currently filled by supply staff.

Achievement and standards

Unvalidated national test results for 2006 show an improvement in reading, writing and mathematics from 2005 at Key Stage 1. Results at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science have dipped since 2005. Standards at the end of each key stage remain well below average.

From their low starting points, children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. However, progress in the remainder of the school is unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are too low. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirms that there is still significant underachievement in Years 1 to 6.

Rigorous assessment procedures have been put in place since the time of the previous inspection and the school is now beginning to collect data about the progress of individual pupils. However, it is too early for the school to be able to demonstrate clear and sustained improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- raise standards and improve achievement for all groups of pupils in English, mathematics and science, by raising teacher expectations of what pupils can do – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are encouraged to listen attentively and they cooperate well with one another. Most pupils work hard in lessons and behave well. Occasionally, a few older pupils lack motivation when lessons are less interesting. Attendance is well below the national average. This reduces the opportunities for pupils to make the best progress they can.

Quality of provision

Although the quality of teaching has improved, there is still too much teaching that is not good enough. There is very little teaching of consistently good quality and too much that is mediocre. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are frequently too low and pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make as much progress as they could. Although pupils are not

disruptive, this lack of challenge results in significant periods of 'off task' time and many pupils make inadequate progress.

Although there is now a consistent approach to planning, it is often weak. Teachers now routinely share lesson objectives with their pupils and this is a significant improvement. However, tasks are not always well matched to what the pupils are supposed to be learning. Assessment is not used well enough to ensure that the pupils' work builds on their different starting points and capabilities.

In the few better lessons, teachers' questioning is robust and work is challenging. However, too many teachers do not use questioning sufficiently well to assess what pupils know, understand and can do within a lesson. This results in insufficient challenge for many pupils because the next steps in their learning have not been assessed accurately.

Significant improvements have been made in the way pupils present their work. They take a pride in what they do and their books are well organised. Pupils and staff participate enthusiastically in the recently introduced 'wake and shake' sessions before school starts in the morning and afternoon. This helps to prepare pupils well for their lessons as well as encouraging punctuality.

Pupils' work is marked systematically but guidance about how they could improve their work is inconsistent. Too few pupils receive frequent and clear direction about how to make their work better. Although there is some developing practice in setting targets, this is inconsistent. On occasions, targets are expressed in terms that pupils do not understand.

School assessment procedures have improved and pupils' progress is now being monitored more rigorously. Teachers are beginning to be held to account for the progress pupils are making in their classes. However, these procedures are new and have not yet had time to show a measurable raising of standards.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing engaging tasks appropriate for all year groups and improving the use of assessment data to move pupils on in their learning – satisfactory
- improve the care, guidance and support for all pupils by ensuring that they are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their learning – inadequate.

Leadership and management

The newly appointed headteacher is leading the school very well. She has a clear understanding of what the school should be achieving and what needs to be done to improve pupils' learning. The school improvement plan is sufficiently detailed and covers the most important areas to be addressed. Actions are broken down into sensible steps based on an appropriate timetable. Milestones have been established to measure how successful the work of the school is in making things better. In addition, senior managers have prepared action plans to develop English, mathematics, science and key aspects of the school. However, there is considerable overlap between some of these documents which is likely to make it difficult for the school to manage the process of improvement.

A comprehensive programme of activities has been put in place to monitor the work of the school. Lesson observations and scrutiny of planning and pupils' work are carried out routinely. Feedback to staff is sensibly included in the programme. However, too few members of staff are involved in carrying out these activities. Although lesson observations are satisfactory, they are not rigorous enough. Too little evidence is included in the written feedback to teachers to enable them to improve as quickly as they could.

The high expectations of the new headteacher and clear guidelines for staff have started to establish a coherent staff team. Staff at all levels feel valued and want to make the school a better place to learn and work. Senior managers are now enabled to carry out their work effectively. There is a strong sense of teamwork and morale is good throughout the school. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language.

The governing body is developing a clear understanding of its role and responsibilities. It is provided with a suitable level of good quality information about the school's performance by the headteacher. Governors ask appropriate questions and are beginning to hold the school to account.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve the leadership and management of the school by: ensuring that the headteacher and deputy headteacher establish a rigorous, strategic approach to help raise standards; improving teamwork throughout the school to raise morale; deploying support staff effectively and developing the role of the governing body to ensure that it receives sufficient information about pupils' underachievement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has provided good support for the school. It has been particularly successful in assisting the school in appointing a headteacher and a deputy headteacher. The support provided by literacy and numeracy consultants as well as a specialist teacher is beginning to make a difference to the quality of teaching.

The local authority statement of action is satisfactory. It covers all of the improvement areas. Appropriate actions are scheduled through the planned recovery period, although some of these lack detail. The limited number of measurable success criteria is likely to make it difficult for the local authority to measure progress over short time periods with sufficient rigour.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Quality of local authority's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Learning and Culture for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector