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Mrs L Vyas
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Vyas

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Green End Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit with John Brennan and Linda Murphy, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 20 and 21 June 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

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, a range of other staff, a group of pupils, the vice-chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher who was in post at the time of the visit in February/March has left the school. Green End is now working in a soft federation with a neighbouring school, whose headteacher is the headteacher of both schools. A teacher has also left, two more are due to leave at the end of the term and there is an additional vacancy. Three replacement teachers have been appointed, one already in post and the other two to start in September, when the number of classes is due to reduce by one. There should then be a full complement of permanent teachers. Changes have

also been made to the support staff team, with more appointments due ready for September.

Achievement and standards

The 2007 results at Key Stage 1 are positive overall, higher than anticipated at the last visit and exceeding the targets set by the school. On most measures standards are higher than at the inspection in 2005 and the dips seen in 2006 have been reversed. There have been particular improvements in mathematics and writing, especially at the higher level. Some measures are still below the equivalent 2006 national figures, but others are close to them and the proportions of pupils gaining a higher level in writing and an average level in mathematics are above national figures. There is some variability in the progress pupils make across classes and year groups, but overall, progress since the previous inspection is now satisfactory.

The previously inaccurate judgements made by teachers about the standards children in the Foundation Stage were attaining have been tackled. Better assessment arrangements are establishing a more secure baseline from which children's progress can be checked and compared with previous years. Staff have a growing understanding of the importance of assessment and its use to gauge the level of children's work more accurately and consistently. The data is being used to set higher expectations of what children can achieve. Children in the Reception class have yet to reach the nationally expected levels for pupils of their age and their standards are much lower than the national and local authority average for 2006. Relative strengths are in mathematical understanding and weaknesses are in reading and writing in particular.

The picture at Key Stage 2 is mixed. Teacher assessments made in May, which give the closest indication of what the end-of-key stage test results are likely to be, show that standards in English have risen as compared to 2005 and on most measures have reversed the dip seen in 2006. Standards in writing in particular are higher. Although still below the equivalent 2006 national figures, this is an improvement in English. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils on line to gain the average level is a little higher than in previous years, but the proportion on line to gain the higher level is lower than last year. Standards in science have declined considerably from last year. The Year 6 pupils in 2007 have slightly higher prior attainment than the groups in 2006 and 2005, and standards would be expected to be a little higher. Across the key stage pupils' progress is variable. Although a reasonable proportion of pupils are now making more than the expected progress, there are still too many not making enough. There is inconsistency across classes and year groups. This largely reflects the quality of teaching that pupils have received in the past, affected in part by the changes that some classes have experienced. Although there is not yet sufficient progress on this issue as whole across Key Stage 2, there are encouraging signs of improvement. Assessment processes across the school are continuing to develop and are giving a more accurate and informed view of the progress pupils are

making and there is beginning to be better use made of the information at a strategic and classroom level.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Raise the standards attained by pupils in Key Stage 2, especially in English – inadequate.
- Maintain the improved standards in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils continue to behave well in lessons and around the school and have positive attitudes to their learning, trying hard to do what is asked of them. A minority, mainly boys, find it difficult to follow instructions and participate purposefully in lessons and they sometimes cause friction with others. Recent strategies to deal with this more robustly at a senior level are having an impact. In contrast to the rest of the day, lunchtimes are somewhat less productive. The dining room is noisy and the potential to ensure a pleasant time there is not realised. Although some activities are provided on the playground, not all pupils participate and there is little scope for others to sit quietly and engage in quiet social interaction.

Analysis of attendance data has only very recently been used to advantage to investigate thoroughly the reasons for the continuing low attendance. The many incentives that the school has introduced continue to help some pupils attend more regularly. However, for a significant core of pupils, attendance rates remain low. Several factors adversely affect attendance. These include families taking extended holidays and a high proportion of sporadic absence. There is also insufficiently robust and prompt action with families to secure their children's attendance and the responsibilities to monitor attendance have not been allocated in the most effective way. The headteacher is beginning to take appropriate strategic action, as well as tightening day-to-day procedures, to follow up absences directly. It is too early for these changes to show improvement in attendance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified in the inspection in November 2005:

- Improve levels of attendance – inadequate.

Quality of provision

The positive impact of actions to improve teaching and learning, especially the most recent ones taken, is evident. There are still weaknesses that need to be tackled and teaching is not yet fully effective or consistent, but overall progress since the last

inspection is now satisfactory. All teachers have specific targets to work towards, identified through the monitoring of their work, which is helping to sharpen the focus of classroom practice. The stronger systems for tracking pupils' progress are providing more detailed information on where individuals are in their learning and guidance has been given on how to use this when planning tasks for them. As a result the activities pupils are given when working in groups are better matched to their differing needs. Pupils respond with particular enthusiasm to tasks that are practically based and enable them to work together. There is scope for pupils to be made more aware of individual targets to help them improve their work. There is more effective use of teaching assistants to support specific individuals and groups. The beginnings and endings of lessons are often less effective. While some introductions are good, some are overly long and are characterised by questioning which does not probe thinking deeply enough, especially for higher attaining pupils, which can lead to them 'switching off'. By contrast some are rushed, resulting in unclear explanations that cause confusion and reduce pupils' understanding. Teachers have responded to advice to involve pupils more actively, such as using 'talking partners'. When this works well it gives pupils good opportunities to develop ideas and reasoning, but it is sometimes organised too superficially to result in effective learning. The best lessons have a fast and lively pace, but learning time is lost through some delayed starts. Further time is sometimes taken up by teachers having to manage the difficult behaviour of a minority of pupils. Lesson planning and delivery are monitored and teachers are encouraged to evaluate the success of their practice. The information gained is starting to be used more systematically to promote further improvement.

Very recent changes in the organisation of the Foundation Stage unit have led to a firm structure that is on the whole appropriate to the children's needs. Teaching roles are clearly defined and teaching assistants are deployed well, with increased responsibility. An appropriate range of ways of organising children and their learning is increasing the opportunities for pupils' independence and beginning to accelerate their learning. These basic improvements are allowing a greater focus on the quality of activities presented to the pupils. The underpinning planning is clear and there are encouraging signs of better progress. Strengths are emerging in the choice of tasks children are given and in the teaching of small groups within the general activities, which is increasingly better matched to pupils' individual needs. These techniques are not yet matched by the pace of the teaching in larger groups for literacy and numeracy. In these groups the pace is slower: it leads to a loss of attention on the part of some pupils and insufficient challenge for higher attainers.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The arrival of the new headteacher has resulted in an accelerated rate of improvement. She has quickly and accurately identified what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses. She has a clear strategic approach, with appropriate plans put in place and some decisive action already taken. The changes made to date and the improvements planned for implementation in September are good and should provide the structures and systems necessary to implement her vision for the school successfully. Importantly, she has secured the support of staff: their morale is higher than previously. Although it is early days and many plans have yet to be carried out in full, the new headteacher is having a very positive impact on the school. She is well supported by the effective deputy headteacher, who has shown good leadership on developing systems for tracking pupils' progress. Other senior leaders' contributions are less pronounced as yet, but they now have clear job descriptions, understand their role and are beginning to show more leadership through some monitoring of practice and its impact, especially on pupils' progress.

Improving the effectiveness of subject leaders has been the focus of limited attention due to other areas being prioritised. However, all subjects now have a leader allocated to them and clear expectations of their role for September have been established. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are improving. Staff are responding soundly to guidance and further advice as to how to focus more directly on pupils' learning is welcomed.

Key governors continue to be effective in challenging the school to bring about improvement. They have been instrumental to the recent changes, including the innovative federation arrangements, which are resulting in the school benefiting not only from the input of an experienced headteacher but support and guidance at a variety of other levels too. With the additional information that is now being provided to the governing body, other governors are starting to make a greater contribution. A significant health-and-safety issue was drawn to the attention of the governors.

The school has moved from having a deficit budget to a balanced budget in the last financial year, with an appropriate contingency, despite substantial calls on it such as for supply teacher costs.

Although the very recent developments are having a demonstrable impact on the effectiveness of the school, they have not yet been able to compensate fully for the slow rate of progress overall since the school became subject to special measures. However, there is now a very clear awareness of what is needed to bring about the required improvements and the school is now well placed to raise the rate of progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- Improve the capacity of senior managers and governors to evaluate the school's effectiveness – good.
- Improve subject leadership across the school – inadequate.
- Reduce the budget deficit to allow for prudent financial management – good.

External support

Support from the local authority continues to bring benefit to the school. The link adviser works closely with the headteacher and governors and gives good advice on a range of issues. Other consultants continue to give helpful support, although the school is playing a greater part in coordinating this support to ensure maximum benefit. A new, helpful source of guidance is that from the federated partner school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Deal with the health-and-safety issue reported to governors.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services, Education for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Joan McKenna
Additional Inspector