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25 March 2008

Ms Joyce Moore
Interim Headteacher
Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit
Smallwood Road
Garrett Lane
London
SW17 0TW

Dear Ms Moore

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit

Following my visit with David White, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2008. 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 – good

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Wandsworth.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 March 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' written work and met with the interim headteacher, other staff, pupils, the chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The temporary arrangements for the senior leadership of the school continue. The appointment process for a substantive headteacher is under way, with the intention of having the post filled from September 2009. At the time of the inspection the substantive deputy headteacher was absent from school as a result of ill health and was not expected to return until the start of the new term. The IEB is now well established, with structures and systems in place. The new staffing structure has been finalised but the process of appointing staff has yet to begin. The school has four temporary teachers and one temporary support assistant.

Achievement and standards

Overall, the school is making satisfactory progress in raising standards of attainment. It has established a good system for tracking pupils' progress and information from this feeds into the thorough half-termly review of individual pupils' progress. As a result of training, permanent staff have a deeper understanding of National Curriculum levels and, consequently, teacher assessment is more reliable. Current data show the school to be on track to achieve its targets with the exception of reading in Year 3. Appropriate strategies are in place to recover this position. Lesson observations indicate that most pupils are making satisfactory progress. However, the pace of pupils' progress across the school is uneven. Pupils in the Nursery are making good progress but this slows to satisfactory in the Reception class and in Key Stage 1. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 are making good progress. Momentum is lost in classes taught by temporary teachers because they do not know the pupils well enough to tailor learning to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils enjoy school and are very happy to share their positive views of the improvements being made. They are particularly pleased with the improvements that have been made to enrich their learning experiences. As one pupil said, 'We are fully involved instead of just sitting.' There is calm throughout the school and behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they will be well supported by adults if they are concerned about



anything. The school now has systems that enable it to track attendance accurately and has introduced a range of strategies to tackle the high rates of absence. The recent focus fortnight on attendance and punctuality has had a positive impact, with attendance beginning to fall into line with the national average. The school has yet to analyse fully the reasons why some groups and individuals attend school regularly while others do not.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by improving behaviour and ensuring that all pupils are safe and well cared for – good

Quality of provision

Where the continuity of teaching has been maintained, pupils' learning has improved. Teachers and support staff have a better understanding of pupils' prior attainment and individual needs. Where teaching is at its most effective, learning objectives are clear and closely matched to the needs of individual pupils with the flexibility to stretch the most able pupils. Improved planning includes a good variety of activities that are well sequenced to accelerate learning. There are opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of self-assessment and they are much clearer about their learning targets. Teachers are more expert in probing and consolidating pupils' understanding with good use of open-ended questioning to develop higher-order thinking skills. 'Target mats' that describe learning goals are helping pupils to grasp what they must do to improve their basic skills. The outcomes of questionnaires show that these targets are also clear to parents. The school is working hard, with growing success, to involve parents in supporting their children's learning. Expectations for marking are now clear. There is still variability in practice but more evidence of marking that identifies strengths and the next learning steps for pupils.

These significant improvements are sustainable only with a team of permanent teachers and support staff. Where temporary staff are teaching classes, they are working hard to get up to speed; however, the pace of improvement inevitably slows and there is a direct negative impact on the quality of challenge for pupils in lessons.

All the lessons observed in the language unit were judged to be good. Notable strengths were the development of basic skills through highly individualised, effective support, and good use of praise and encouragement to give pupils the confidence to take risks in their learning. Provision for pupils with additional needs in the language unit is now good but it is less effective in mainstream classes, where resources are limited.

The school has continued to concentrate its efforts on the core subjects of English, mathematics and, most recently, science. This has ensured that the pupils enjoy their learning as well as making better progress. All subjects of the National Curriculum are now being taught but do not yet benefit from the rigorous approach



that has been dedicated to the provision for the core subjects. However, the senior management team is ensuring that a thematic approach to learning is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils. More detailed and thorough schemes of work will be produced when the new staffing structure provides individual subject leaders to lead the revision. Arrangements for the provision of music and physical education are now in place.

Senior leaders have concentrated successfully on delivering a consistently high quality of planning, built on the prior attainment of the pupils. The curriculum is now regularly monitored and evaluated. Visits and visitors are being planned to enrich and enliven pupils' learning experiences. The number of extra-curricular activities is also increasing.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide consistently good levels of challenge and clear academic guidance for their pupils – satisfactory
 - ensuring that the curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and provides enjoyable activities that capture the interest of the pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher and temporary senior leaders are relentless in driving the pace of improvement. They are very dedicated, working tirelessly and effectively to take the school forward. Systems for monitoring and evaluation, the use of assessment information, target setting and the management of pupils' behaviour have strengthened. Middle leaders have benefited from training. They have undertaken joint lesson observations with the Local Leader in Education and are now rapidly developing the capacity to evaluate the work of teams accurately and independently.

Underperformance has been tackled robustly. A number of staff have moved on and it is imperative that high-calibre permanent staff are secured as replacements. Similarly, the appointment of a permanent senior leadership team is a prerequisite to realising the vision of a better future for the school and the local community. As the time frame within which these tasks have to be achieved is challenging, urgent and concerted action is required. The part-time additional deputy headteacher is contracted to support the school only until the end of the summer term. The substantive deputy headteacher is suffering from ill health. The assistant headteacher is also part-time. The senior team is stretched to the limit and the pace of progress is not sustainable unless leadership capacity is increased. In addition, uncertainty about the future is rightly worrying both parents and staff.

The IEB has established itself quickly. It is working well with senior leaders to set the strategic direction of the school and monitor progress with the school improvement plan. The chair works hard to make herself accessible to staff, pupils and parents. She listens carefully to their views and ensures that they are represented in board meetings.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards to at least average levels and improve pupils' achievement by improving the ability of leaders, including the governors, to evaluate accurately the work of the school and to pursue improvement rigorously – good

External support

The local authority and the Local Leader in Education are providing good support in operational matters. However, what the school needs most at this point in its development is certainty about its future in the shape of a permanent senior leadership team and a full complement of permanent staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase leadership capacity urgently and appoint a substantive senior leadership team.

