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Ms J Moore
Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit
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Dear Ms Moore

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

Following my visit with David Radomsky to your school on 18 and 19 November 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 - good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - good

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Special measures: monitoring of Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 November 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and substantive headteacher, other staff, groups of pupils, members of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Eight new members of staff joined the school at the start of term. Two assistant headteachers (one external and one internal appointment) are now in post. In addition, two senior teaching assistants have been appointed and will take up their posts at the end of the month. There is now a timeline for instituting a shadow governing body in January 2010. Funding has been secured to provide new accommodation for Nursery and Reception children in the near future.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Provisional data for 2009 confirm a significant improvement in pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and indicate that most pupils are making good progress from their well below average starting points. Standards are now broadly in line with national averages but higher in mathematics and science than in English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and lower attaining boys make slower but satisfactory progress. Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with well below average attainment and standards remain very low at the end of the key stage. Pupils' uneven pattern of progress is a legacy of weaknesses in teaching. Embedding good teaching throughout the school so that pupils are not dependent on 'catch-up' strategies in Years 5 and 6 remains a significant challenge.

The school continues to develop its system for tracking the progress of pupils. Teacher assessment is more reliable but there is work to do in sharpening the precision of assessment in foundation subjects. The school is establishing a clearer picture of children's skills and understanding on entry. Methods for recording children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been strengthened but teachers and teaching assistants are not always systematic in following up what they have observed.



Pupils are much more enthusiastic about learning and school. They appreciate the improvements to indoor and outdoor areas that increase variety in their learning and play activities. Classrooms are bright, well-equipped and stimulating learning spaces. The development of a good range of extra activities has made an important contribution to pupils' positive attitudes.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

There has been an effective focus on the five Every Child Matters outcomes through class assemblies and display work. Pupils are much more aware of their school as a multicultural community where difference is valued. Pupils feel safe, very well looked after and confident they can turn to the adults in the school if they have any problems. Healthy lifestyles are effectively promoted and, as a result, pupils understand the importance of exercise and eating food that is good for them. Pupils are polite, respectful and cooperative. Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils' participation in a recent anti-bullying campaign demonstrates how seriously they take their responsibility to be considerate and kind to others. Despite having so many new teachers, warm and caring relationships have been quickly established.

In comparison with the same period last year, attendance has improved but still remains significantly below average. However, there are no persistent absentees. Punctuality is improving. The school's educational welfare officer undertakes 'school gate checks' where she follows up on pupils arriving after the start of the day. As a result, fewer pupils are late.

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.

The effectiveness of provision

There have been significant changes to staffing. However, systems and induction procedures have been robust enough to sustain consistency in behaviour management and common approaches to teaching. Provision in the language unit continues to be good.

There are encouraging early signs that the new class teachers will be effective in accelerating pupils' progress but they are still acquiring a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. The school is refocusing on some aspects of teaching to ensure pupils' progress does not falter, particularly:

- the pace of lessons
- directing questioning to maximise pupils' participation and concentration



- opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work
- linking marking to curricular targets and National Curriculum levels
- extension activities for higher attaining pupils.

An assistant headteacher now has responsibility for the development of the curriculum. She has a clear vision of a more creative, topic-based curriculum and a good start has been made on securing planned improvements.

Progress since the last visit on the areas 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.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The substantive headteacher will take up his post in January 2010. He has wasted no time in getting to grips with the challenges ahead and has attended a number of school meetings including meetings of the interim executive board. The interim headteacher will relinquish her role at the end of this term. Her inspirational leadership has engendered belief in a better future for the school and increased capacity for sustained improvement. Most of the posts in the staffing structure have been filled. The recently appointed subject leaders, Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 leader and the assistant headteachers are settling into their roles. They are demonstrating good potential for evaluating the work of the school and driving improvement independently.

Performance management meetings have taken place with all permanent class teachers. Staff targets are linked to school priorities and accountability for pupils' progress is increasing. The interim executive board is working effectively to complete the transition to a governing body. The leadership of the school is now far more outward looking. A number of well-planned events have been successful in involving parents in the life of the school. Consequently, more parents are interested in serving on the governing body.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements.

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, School Improvement Partner and City Challenge continue to work effectively in support of the school. Well-targeted interventions to support pupils' learning and improve teaching have been central. In particular, teachers are benefiting from their participation in the 'Improving teaching' and 'Good to outstanding' programmes. The local authority is very aware of the need to keep support sharply focused during the challenging period of transition from the interim headteacher to the substantive headteacher.