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Ms C Nuttall
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Dear Ms Nuttall

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Henry Fawcett Primary School

Following my visit with Thomas Gibson to your school on 20 and 21 January 2010, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – 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 Director of Children's Services for Lambeth and the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Henry Fawcett Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 January 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive and associate headteachers, the deputy headteacher and other members of the management team, the chair of the interim executive board, two representatives of the local authority and a group of pupils. A meeting of the parent council was also observed.

Context

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was working in partnership with Hill Mead Primary School, a successful primary school within the local authority. This arrangement has now been formalised as a 'soft' federation and is anticipated to continue for three years. The headteacher of Hill Mead is now executive headteacher of both schools. Several members of Hill Mead's staff, mainly senior leaders and experienced teachers, now work at Henry Fawcett. These are not short-term placements. There have been several changes of staff. Two teachers and two early years educators joined the school in January. London Challenge has also provided funding for an additional Reception class teacher for the remainder of this academic year. In addition, the local authority's teaching and learning consultant for the early years works at the school for three days a week.

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

Pupils are beginning to make more consistent progress. Attainment and progress are carefully tracked and the school's data show that, for most pupils, the rate of progress is accelerating. This means that they are starting to close the gap on the levels of attainment expected for their age. However, for many pupils, that gap is substantial and attainment remains exceptionally low in all year groups, apart from Year 6. Strong teaching and carefully targeted support has helped the pupils in this year group make progress at a particularly swift rate and they have already made up the ground that they had lost since the age of seven. Their attainment overall remains low, but if they continue to make progress at this rate, there will be a substantial improvement in test results at the end of the year. In Years 3 and 5, pupils have not made the progress that the school expects in reading and mathematics. Phase leaders understand that improvement in these aspects is a priority. Senior leaders also know that raising attainment across all year groups is crucial in order to secure long-term improvements in academic outcomes.

In lessons, pupils generally made satisfactory progress. Two factors limited progress. First, there are minor weaknesses in teaching, which will be discussed later in this



report. Second, the pupils' response in lessons is not securely positive. It is clear that most pupils want to learn and they respond with interest and good application to tasks and activities that engage them. However, they switch off readily, especially when they are expected to listen for any time either to their classmates or their teacher. Some find it difficult to persevere with a task when they get stuck, and lack strategies to help themselves or each other. The pupils sometimes appear tired and listless and do not consistently show enjoyment in their learning. Many are clearly unused to having to take some responsibility for their own learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards in English and mathematics across the school so that at least 80% of pupils make good or better progress each academic year – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour has improved. At all times during this monitoring inspection, behaviour was satisfactory and on some occasions, such as during assembly, behaviour was good. Clear procedures for managing behaviour have been established, and the staff are consistent in their expectations. Some teachers have developed effective techniques for managing movement in the classroom but where changes of activity are not effectively managed, too much time for learning can be lost. Staggered lunch and break times ensure that there is always sufficient space for pupils to run about. Pupils appreciate the employment of sports coaches to work with them at break times. Girls, in particular, felt that they had been helped to reclaim some of the space in the playground that previously was dominated by boys.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to increase pupils' contribution to the school community and their voice is increasingly heard. Assemblies are effective in promoting a sense of community and shared values.

The school's rigorous approach to promoting attendance and following up absence is paying dividends, although the rate of improvement in attendance has not been as swift as the school would have liked. Nevertheless, attendance for the first term of this academic year was 1.4 percentage points above the figure for the previous year. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing, but is still too high. In the Nursery and Reception classes, rates of attendance are lowest and the level of persistent absence is highest. Attendance is not statutory for pupils of this age and very young children tend to have higher occurrences of minor illness, but the school acknowledges that good attendance habits are best formed early and is to take steps to work more closely with parents in these year groups.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve behaviour so that all pupils feel safe and learning in lessons is not disrupted by ensuring teachers make their expectations explicit and



enforce these consistently; developing strategies to deal with the most disruptive pupils; and ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils – satisfactory

- Increasing attendance so that it matches the local authority average in all classes by July 2010, by embedding the school's systems and encouraging teachers to raise the profile of good attendance with pupils and parents – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved; inadequate teaching has reduced substantially and the proportion of good teaching is growing. Senior staff have a secure knowledge of where strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie and are targeting support accordingly. A large proportion of the teachers are either newly qualified or new to the school and relatively inexperienced. The school has an unusual staffing structure. For each year group in Key Stage 1 and for Years 3/4 and 5/6 in Key Stage 2, an additional teacher who does not have full-time classroom teaching responsibilities is employed. The additional teachers form the middle leadership tier and are experienced and successful practitioners. Their role is to support and guide the class teachers in developing their practice, as well as providing focused teaching for targeted groups of pupils. The precise nature of their deployment is determined by the particular needs of the teachers and pupils in their year or phase. This means that the teachers have numerous opportunities to observe good practice and to receive coaching appropriate to their needs. There is a good deal of potential in this arrangement; impact is showing in the better progress pupils are already making, but the full impact on the quality of teaching has yet to be realised.

In the better lessons, teachers' expectations were high and the pace was crisp. Pupils were given opportunities to talk to one another and to share ideas with the class, and other strategies such as role play helped keep them involved and interested. In their plans, teachers give thought as to how tasks will be adapted to match pupils' differing needs.

In some lessons, the objectives for learning were rather broad and did not make clear exactly what the pupils were expected to learn, rather than what they were going to do. There was sometimes a mismatch between the objective and the 'steps to success', which set out what pupils must include in their work in order to reach the objective. The use of 'steps to success' is not yet second nature for all teachers. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons were not always used well and some teachers' checking of pupils' learning and progress was perfunctory.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching as soon as possible so that 80% of it is good or better by using the new staffing structure to facilitate staff development through coaching and modelling; increasing the pace and



challenge in lessons; improving the quality of marking and involving pupils in assessing their own learning – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership team has done much to improve the school's ethos and culture and to secure firm foundations for further development. Daily assemblies, the school uniform and new motto of 'yes we can' all contribute to the positive tone. Senior and middle leaders work well together and have established many of the necessary systems and structures to enable the school to function smoothly on a day-to-day basis, to keep policy and practice under close scrutiny and to shape the way forward. Staff are enjoying working in their year and phase teams and morale is good. There is a strong commitment to improvement at all levels.

The interim executive board is an effective driving force. Although few in number, its members have complementary skills and abilities. They provide the school with strong support, but are also robust in holding senior leaders to account for performance.

A parents' council has been established. The meeting that took place during this inspection was well attended. The parents' council is useful on a number of fronts. It provides regular opportunities for parents to express their views and opinions and involves them in developing and agreeing policies, for example on how the school should deal with bullying. It is also an important step in promoting community cohesion.

The school had accumulated a large deficit in its budget. The experienced bursar from Hill Mead School is helping to clarify the information held about the school's financial position. Steps such as the restructuring of staffing have helped bring about a substantial reduction in the deficit and steps are being taken to set up a plan for recovery.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Improvements in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage are recent. Monitoring by the school and the local authority last term highlighted that insufficient progress was being made in tackling some of the issues identified at the last inspection. Additional support was quickly provided to enable the necessary changes to happen. The 'key person' system is now established and baseline assessments of children's skills and understanding have been carried out. The indoor learning environment has been rearranged and now encompasses all of the areas of learning and allows children to select for themselves. Planning procedures have been overhauled. However, there has been little time since all of this work was done and improvements in outcomes for the children are still to show. Some of the staff are inexperienced with this age group. Their understanding of how to use the assessment information to plan relevant learning opportunities and experiences for



individual children within the framework of the early years curriculum is not secure. The targets in the school's action plan for the Early Years Foundation Stage have not been fully met.

At the moment, improvements in provision are heavily reliant on external support. The teaching and learning consultant is a skilled and experienced practitioner. She is working intensively with the Early Years Foundation Stage staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of the early years curriculum, and of effective ways of promoting the learning and development of young children.

- Improve the provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by putting in place the key worker scheme, improving the outdoor provision and quality of teaching, and making better use of assessment and planning procedures – inadequate

External support

The local authority had been working with the school for some time before the last inspection. Their efforts had brought about substantial improvements, such as the strength in leadership provided through the partnership with Hill Mead School, the establishment of the interim executive board and the redecoration of the building. The local authority is continuing to invest a good deal in the school and is working in a planned and well-coordinated way with partners such as the London Challenge to bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and learning. The plan of action produced following the last inspection is fit for purpose. Targets are challenging, but achievable. The school improvement partner provides good support and his evaluation of progress so far is realistic and accurate. The impact of external support is good.