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24 March 2010

Mrs Margaret Barnfield
Shaw Hill Primary School
Anthony Road
Alum Rock
Birmingham
B8 3AN

Dear Mrs Barnfield

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Shaw Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22-23 March 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 be appointed subject to the following qualification: discussion and agreement with the lead inspector.

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 governors and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies
Additional Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Shaw Hill Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 22-23 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the headteacher and other members of staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the school was last inspected, the teacher in the Nursery has returned from maternity leave and resumed her substantive role. There is one temporary staff member covering another maternity leave.

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

The school is working with much determination to raise achievement and has made an important start. Progress remains satisfactory, but with signs of acceleration across the school. Written work in Year 6, for instance, has examples of good progress in content and length. Pupils' learning is aided by their enthusiasm, motivation and attentiveness in lessons. They invariably listen well and work hard, and are proud of their achievements – they are keen to show visitors how well they read, for example. The school's assessment information illustrates some good progress in mathematics and English, most particularly in reading, but learning is still too variable across year groups to have made a marked impact on attainment. In addition, there are also some pockets of underachievement, especially among those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school's predictions from its most recent assessments this term show greater proportions of pupils on track to reach the expected and higher levels in English and mathematics in the current Year 6, although writing lags behind reading at the higher Level 5. With some variation, the predictions for most year groups are for greater numbers reaching higher levels, reflecting the school's increased expectations and improvement to provision for the more able. Nevertheless, attainment remains low. While the school is gaining some success in enhancing the quality and interest of pupils' writing, their preparation for the future is hampered by weaknesses in basic literacy skills, such as spelling, sentence construction, handwriting and presentation. There are also some shortcomings in key numeracy skills, such as knowledge of multiplication tables.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes continue to make satisfactory progress, with some similar signs of improvement to those found elsewhere in the school. Personal and social skills in the Nursery are developing well, so that children are happily involved in activities and content to work side-by-side with class mates



Spoken language develops securely in small groups through constant chat with an adult and reinforcement of key vocabulary. Exciting topics and visits add much to children's knowledge and understanding of the world in the Reception classes, although learning is constrained by too much noisiness during activities when they can move freely around the space and chose what they want to do.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise pupils' achievement, especially in writing in all key stages and in mathematics by Year 6; increase the proportion of pupils who exceed the levels expected for their age in all subjects and key stages; raise attainment and progress in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Learning is also promoted well by pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to life at school. Sometimes pupils experience real moments of joy when a goal is finally reached. They are enjoying the knowledge they now have of their targets and National Curriculum levels and the opportunities to assess how well they are doing during lessons. Most pupils have good attendance. Consequently, the school has maintained average attendance levels, whilst still being sensitive to religious festivals and robustly encouraging families not to take protracted trips abroad during term time.

The effectiveness of provision

The school is well aware that the quality of teaching is central to lifting academic performance. Some key building blocks have been introduced to help the school move on, the most vital being improvements to assessment. These developments have provided all staff members with clear information about pupils' achievement, reviewed and updated at frequent and regular intervals. Consequently, the school has been enabled to pinpoint particular pupils in need of additional support and target intervention. In addition, lesson planning contains discrete activities for the more able, which provide greater levels of challenge. Importantly, with just the very occasional lapse, inadequate teaching has been eradicated. The school is well aware that it must now work to increase the amount of good and better practice, as this proportion has not yet changed substantially.

Where teaching is most successful, work is well matched to the specific needs of pupils. A lively teaching style ensures a brisk pace, and teaching assistants provide consistently effective support. Tasks are also sometimes placed in an interesting context – using the popularity of 'Dr Who' as a springboard for writing, for example, or sports scores for practising addition. Where such features are present, progress is good, but they are not yet frequent enough in lessons. Other weaknesses include overly long introductions, which limit time for pupils to write at length, and mundane



tasks that fail to take full advantage of pupils' eager willingness to learn. Most significantly, lessons are not readily adapted when it becomes clear that pupils have already met the learning objective and could move on to more challenging work, especially within groups set by ability for mathematics at Key Stage 2.

Improvements to marking are at an early stage. Work is checked regularly against the purpose of the task, but not enough attention is given to correcting spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, nor to untidy presentation.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better and, as a matter of urgency, ensuring that all inadequate teaching is eliminated; ensure that work is matched carefully to the capabilities of more able pupils so that they receive sufficient challenge – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership team has developed a good deal since the school's last inspection and this has proved to be a significant step forward. Understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses has grown, aided particularly by the increased rigour of assessment and the sharing of this information. Consequently, senior leaders now talk about their work and its impact with knowledge and confidence. Their enthusiasm is shared by all staff members, who are positive about change, receptive to advice and keen to improve. Monitoring activity is a firm fixture within the cycle of events. The phase structure enables senior leaders to work closely with staff, plan together and move swiftly to tackle any instances of inadequate teaching. Targeted support, which identifies and follows up shortcomings, has been successful in improving poor practice. However, phase leaders for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 do not have the same opportunity to teach within their phase as others, so limiting their direct involvement and experience of provision in these year groups. Robust discussion with staff about performance data means that all are now more accountable for pupils' progress, and this factor has raised expectations. Confidence with making accurate assessments of pupils' work and attainment is increasing, but these assessments are sometimes overly positive.

Key governors are aware that they must provide the school with greater support and challenge than they do now, most especially in raising achievement. Steps have been taken to establish a clear understanding of the governing body's role and responsibilities and provide more opportunities for monitoring the school's work. In the meantime, governors are benefitting from detailed information provided by the headteacher and senior staff, in order to get to know the school better.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:



- ensure that leaders and managers at all levels and in all key stages use the self-evaluation information more rigorously to identify precisely the reasons why pupils' attainment is not rising; set challenging targets for improvement; monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils; hold staff to account for pupils' progress - good

External support

The local authority has provided the school with strong support, closely directed and overseen by the school's Improvement Partner and monitored regularly. Initiatives have been appropriately prioritised. For example, external support has focused on the key area of assessment, which has provided an essential foundation for self-evaluation.

The local authority's statement of action was judged by Ofsted to have met requirements. The impact of actions contained within this statement has been especially helpful in developing the school's leadership and management, aided by the support of a local successful primary school. The involvement of parents has also been targeted. Parents are being kept informed about the school's current status of need, and pupils' targets and National Curriculum levels are now shared so that parents can take a greater role in their children's learning and progress. The governing body is receiving valuable support from local authority services to increase its effectiveness.